CLOSE TIES

Richmond County Intermediate School

1993

A Look at Agriculture in Richmond County

Close Ties

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> "Agriculture is not just the most essential industry on earth. It is the only essential industry."
>
> -Dr. Boysie Day

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Foreword

This year, the **Close Ties** staff selected for its topic one that is very much a part of the heritage of Richmond County--farming. Since the earliest settlers in this area were farmers, the significance of their contributions throughout the years have been eminently important.

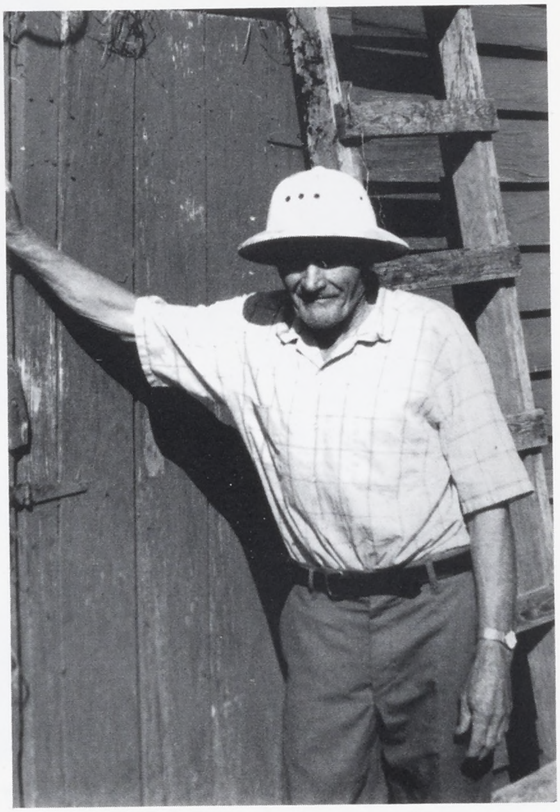
If any of us began our research with the misguided notion that farmers were just good old country boys in overalls chewing on a piece of straw, we soon learned that this is not the case. We found that the farmers in Richmond County are highly skilled individuals who use the most up-to-date scientific information and technical equipment in the every day working of their farms. These individuals are versatile and possess a wealth of knowledge which is unbelievable. One thing we quickly realized was how hard they all work! Sometimes we found ourselves exhausted just from listening to them. We visited farms in every corner of the county, listening with great interest to their stories about the good old days and their expectations for the future.

On our many interviews, we have been in the midst of an assortment of animals ranging from llamas to longhorn cattle. We have stepped in and out of barns, climbed over fences, fed baby calves, and examined crops. Our tapes have been filled with the delightful noises of cackling chickens, crowing roosters, bleating sheep, neighing horses, and mooing cows. It has truly been an incredible experience.

Tell Me 'Bout the Good Ole Days

An Afternoon with Milton Packett

by Mary Haywood, Lesley Lowery, Kathy Morse, Sara Packett, Nathan Richards, Michelle Schools, Michelle Self, and Crystal Simpson



Milton Packett

"I reckon everything I ever did know, and that's very little, I learned from my daddy. I hate to have to say it, but he lost more sense before he died than I've ever had. We moved down here to the farm in the fall of 1921 when I was three. Daddy was a man who could do anything. If he wanted to build something, he could build it. If he wanted to fix something, he could fix it. He had an old boat that he used when he put nets out in the river. The motor didn't have a battery or anything. It made its own fire. I can hardly explain it because it looks like it would be impossible. It had something in front of the motor, and I've seen my daddy take that thing and file it and put it on, and she'd work perfect for about a year. Then he'd have to go back in there and file it again. Why he didn't drown us, I'll never know. I don't care how rough it was, he'd go to his nets near Waterview. The boat was 42 feet long. When it was rough the bow would go down in the sea and the stern would come up. That propeller would come out of the water and she'd be solid flying. That boat would be shaking. It's a wonder it didn't break half in two. After the stern went back down, she'd slow down. I often think about that boat.

"I had chores to do even when I was three. I had to feed the hogs and chickens and tote in wood. Them old heads, they believed in you working! When I was old enough to go to school, I'd get up about six o'clock. My daddy didn't call you the second time. Don't worry! He got you out the bed. When he called you the first time, he meant for you to get up. If you didn't get up, he'd come up there with a limb. I had to feed the hogs, chickens, and milk the cows before I went to school. In the evenings, I had to feed them again and get the wood in the house. I used a crosscut saw to cut the wood and then an axe to split it up. We used wood for the cook stove and King heater. That was every evening, year round, we had to cut wood.

"At mealtime, we ate everything on our plates. If there was something I didn't like, my daddy would say 'Try it boy!' Really, he had a point there because you didn't know if you liked it or not until you tried it. When I was a kid, I didn't like oysters. Now, I'm crazy about them.

"When I was 8 or 9 years old, I was plowing with a 13 Oliver chisel plow when I was too small to even raise the plow up. It was a two-horse plow. He had horses that would come out to the end of the row, swing around, and all I did was take hold of the handle and raise it up. I still have the plow. I've had to put three or four handles on it, but the frame is the same.

"When we were in the fields back then working, nobody had a watch. Somebody would say, 'What time is it?' And them old people would step on the head of their shadow from the sun and they could come within five minutes of the time. They'd know when it was time to quit for lunch.

"Back there then, Mama fed everybody who worked in the fields, not just the family. There were four boys and one girl in my family and we all worked. My sister didn't work in the fields, but she milked cows, got up wood, helped my mother with the cooking, and washed dishes. After everybody was fed lunch, we'd go back to the fields.

"My father raised around 35 acres of corn. Back then we had to work the corn a lot because we didn't have chemicals like they do now. My job as a kid was to go down the rows of corn and throw the dirt away from the stalk to build up little mounds of dirt. Then if it was dry, any rain would go down to the roots. We worked the dirt away until it grew a little bit and we cultivated two times. Nowadays, you plow, disk once or twice, and go in with fertilizer and planter to plant it. Then you spray it and don't come back till harvest.

"We cut every stalk of those 35 acres of corn by hand and shocked it up. It took us about three weeks to cut corn unless we had some rainy days in there. With a combine, you could probably shuck that now in a day and a half, I reckon. We had a corn knife, and we'd go down each row, cut it in shock, and take a string to tie it up. We didn't cut the ears off first. So we had the shock tied up and then we shucked the corn while it was up in bundles. It took the whole winter to shuck it. We didn't shuck it on those real cold days, but I've been out there with six inches of snow on the ground. We'd go out there, take the string off the shock, lay it down on the ground and shuck the ears. We'd throw the ears in a pile, then we'd put a string back around the fodder, tie it up, and set it back up. Fodder is what was left of the plant after the ears were cut off. We would take that to the fields for the cows. It was right good feed. We'd take a horse and wagon out to the fields and load it up with the corn we had shucked, then bring it back and throw it in the corn house.

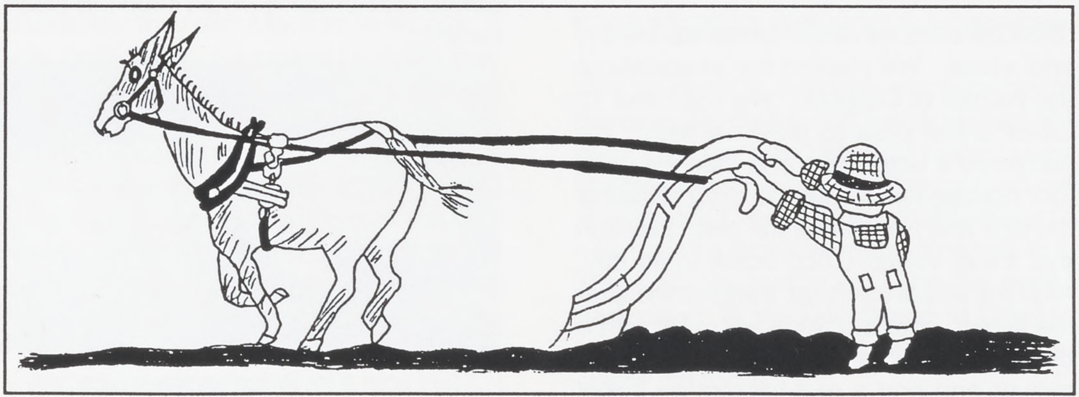
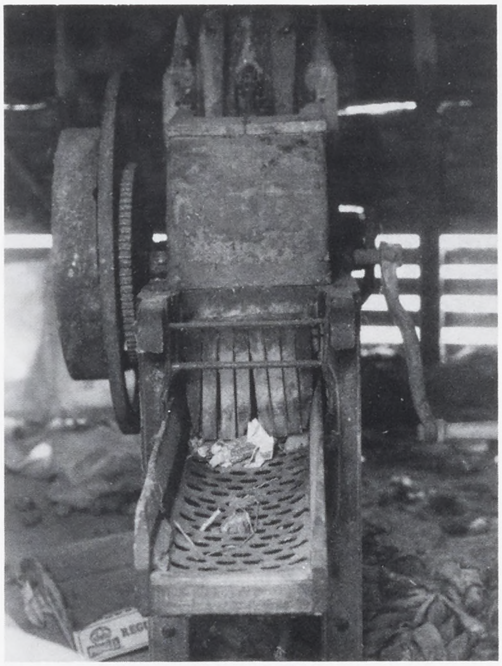


Illustration: Crystal Simpson



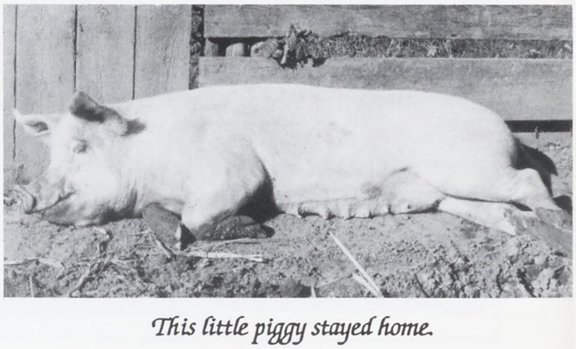
Corn sheller

" We used a corn sheller to shell the corn. You put the ear down in the sheller, turned it, and pieces of corn would come out. The corn would go in the half bushel and the cobs would go out the other end. For the ears we ate, we had to pick out the rotten kernels with a knife. We carried the corn to the mill and had it ground into meal which we ate. We grew what we needed right on the farm so we didn't have to go to the store much. The only things we bought were sugar, pepper, and salt, and every now and then a pound of cheese. Back in those days, you carried your eggs and traded them. Most of the time we went to Cally Barrack's store down in Robley.

"Besides corn, we raised tomatoes, barley, and wheat. We planted the wheat about the middle of October. We used the 13 Oliver chisel plow to plow the field. We harrowed it both ways and then we used four horses, two to pull the drag ahead of the drill and two to pull the drill. I reckon that thing sowed 5,000 acres in its day. After the wheat came up, it stayed there for the winter. Around June we cut it with a binder. A binder was something like a mower and had a real tall reel on it that would come around and pick the heads of the wheat and pull it back so the blade could cut it about four inches from the ground. The wheat ran through the binder and was tied in bunches. Then the boys would have to go out there and shock it up. We put eight shocks in a bunch on the ground and two on top.

"When I was a kid, we didn't have any thresher. A man would come here with his threshing machine and thresh our wheat. We had three wagons bringing the wheat in from the fields. At the end of the day, we had to go out in the field and get the rest of the wheat that hadn't been threshed. We put it in the barn because it might rain on it if we left it out in the fields. We used horses and mules to do all this. We bagged the wheat that was threshed and put a bushel and a half to a bag. My daddy carried six bushels of the wheat to the mill and took some to a man at Red Hill to sell. He kept some for seed in a box that would keep the mice out. The rest he put in the barn to feed the hogs.

"We had hogs, cows, and sheep. We sheared the sheep in May and carried the wool to Richmond, and believe it or not, we got just as much for wool back in the '30s as I'm getting now. We delivered the wool when we took the cattle to the stockyard. We kept some wool at home for local people who wanted it. A man that lived down by Cat Point Creek would come and shear the sheep. He had a rig with gears that you could turn with your hand. When you turned the handle, it would keep the blade turning.



This little piggy stayed home.

We're being baa-aaa-aaad sheep today.

"Have I ever had any bad luck with my sheep? I think I have! I reckon it's all my fault. Two years ago on the day before the fourth of July, I fed up and left here about five o'clock. When I got back, I didn't pay any attention to the barn and went on to bed. The next morning I went out to feed the mule and the horse and the barn door was open. I think I had about 60 bushels of wheat in the barn, and the sheep had ate up half of it. I had some barley in there and they ate some of that. I don't know if I left the barn door open or whether somebody came down here after I left. I shut the barn door and went around to check on the sheep, but they didn't look to be so sick. It was really hot that day and I noticed they were drinking a lot of water. That was the worst thing I could have done. If I had just kept them out of that water, Great God! I went out there the next morning and seven were laying right out in front of the hen house. The following morning, there were eight. I lost 27 of them. It really was sickening.

"I had a buck here last year, a nice buck. I was out there feeding him and it looked like he didn't know to get out of the way. General thing, a sheep's scary. One evening I was walking away from him and something hit me from behind, and he had butt me. I said, 'Doggone!' So I got a stick. I reckon that was the worst thing in the world to do. I ran him on out from there. From that evening right on when the sheep were grazing and I walked near them, he'd run right on up here after me and nothing would back him off. I got rid of him. If I hadn't, he was going to get rid of me. Those pigs could give you a hard time. I've had male hogs that would fight, but those that got fighting, they didn't stay here long.

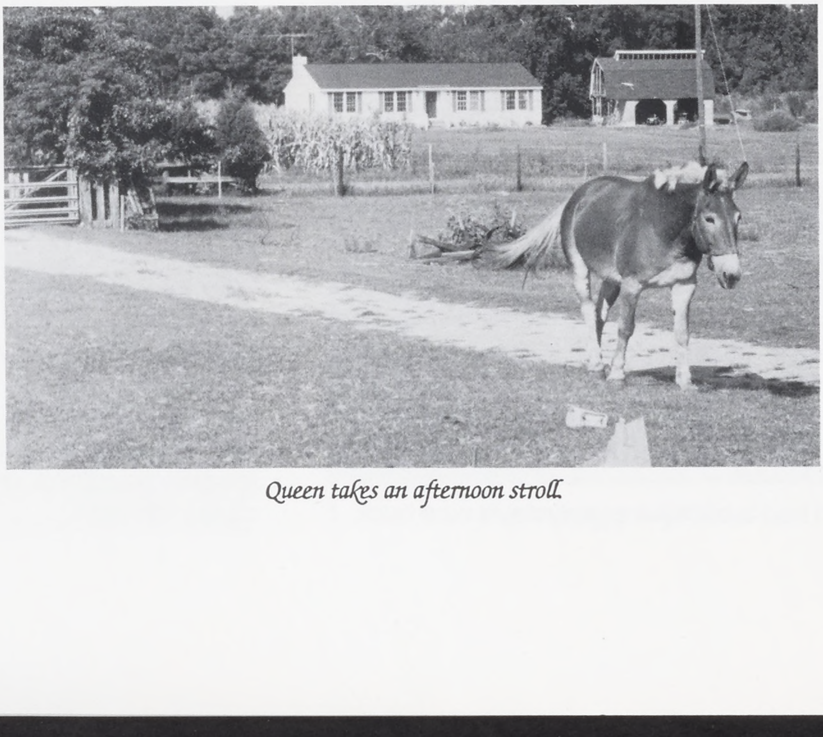
"We had cats to keep the varmints out of the barn. My daddy had five or six cats but back then the cats didn't go to the house like the ones I have now. They stayed out at the barn. Every time my daddy milked a cow he left a little bowl with some milk in it. That's all they had to eat. The last ones I had stayed at the doorstep and I had to feed them cat food, and I mean it had to be classy cat food.

"My father used to keep four or five hundred chickens. At the last, Doodle Clark and Jimmy Jones used to come down here and buy eggs by the crate. My father sold a lot to the Richmond people. How many eggs would we get in a day? I won't like to tell you. I wouldn't tell you a lie, but it was right many. We had white Leghorns, then. Back in those days you couldn't give the brown eggs away. Now after the brown eggs have come back, you can't do a thing in the world with the white ones. Nobody wants a white egg. Everybody's changed.

"I have a tractor, but I keep it over at Mrs. Burton's. I plow with it some and disk. I'd still rather use the horses. You've always heard crazy people do crazy things. I always did like working a horse. I enjoy it. The last few years, I'd go over and get on the tractor, use it half a day, and when I got off it at 12:00, I could hardly stand up. My feet and my hands had gone to sleep. That tractor is jerky and it's hard on my bad back. I can plow behind those horses and I don't have that problem. I have about seven acres I still work with horses.

"My father always had horses. He brought two down here from Cobham Park farm and raised them from colts. One was Kate and one was Jack. He thought the world of that Kate horse. After he got down here, he raised I don't know how many colts, and he could break them. My daddy would start with a colt in March after it got three years old, hooking it beside one of the older horses. He would hook them to a wagon and just fool with them, driving back and forth to the end of the lane. Then he had a riding plow with three horses. He put the colt in the middle and the older horses on the outside. The little colt would jump up a little bit but then go on and do right. You couldn't hook him up to that plow every day. After the corn got up big enough to cultivate single, you would take the colt out there and the first couple of days he would make a preacher cuss--all over the place. But he'd soon learn. Time you finished the crop, he was broke. After one season you'd have a working horse. We had some good ones, no question about it. A good horse wouldn't run away or kick. He'd work. A whole lot of them were nellified, you know. That mule I've got will go down half the row, turn right around, and come on back up to the other end.

"There are a lot of dangers working with animals, I can tell you that right now. I don't trim that mule's front feet because I'm scared of her. That thing will kick you and kill you and then laugh about it. A horse can hurt you if he runs away while you're working him. You've got to pay attention, definitely. When you are cutting hay you don't want to fall in front of that blade and get chopped up. If I'm pulling something out of the blade, I always throw it out of gear, so if something comes along and scares the horses it won't cut me. Year before last I was hauling wood and fell out the wagon. I broke one rib and that thing did hurt. My side never has gotten over it.



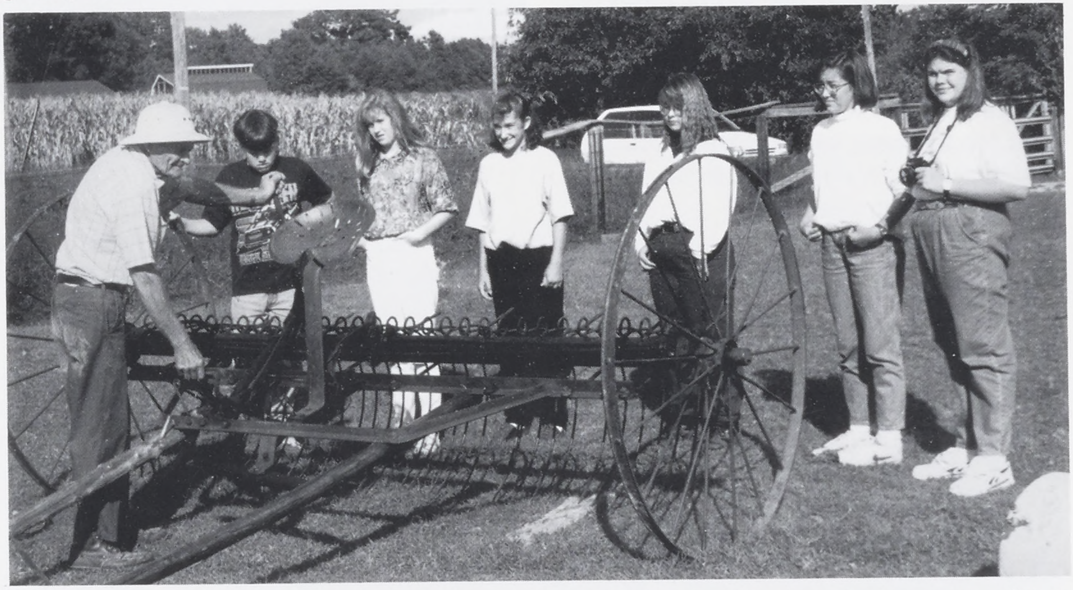
Queen takes an afternoon stroll.

"One time I had the horses hooked up to the wagon. It got to be time to go in and eat dinner, so I drove the horses up, gave them hay, and pulled the bridles off. I didn't tie them up. When I was inside I heard the wagon moving. I looked, and darned if the horses weren't running around between the two barns pulling the wagon. I reckon they wanted water. When they made the turn, they made it too short. They tore two boards off that corn barn and went on down a hill, and I mean they were running. Luck was they ran the tongue in a post and broke it right half in two.

"Yes, old farmers are superstitious. Some farmers won't start a project on Fridays, but I do. My daddy never worked much on Sundays but if a thunderstorm was coming up he'd say, 'Boys, better get out there and get that fodder up.' Anything he didn't have to do he didn't do on Sunday. I didn't pay a whole lot of attention to the moon but he did. I plant my butter beans on a full moon, but it didn't seem to help this year because I planted three rows and I won't get a pint.

"We never did go on many trips. I was seventeen years old when I took my first trip. I went with Dick Farmer up to Pennsylvania on a farm tour in 1937 and I really enjoyed it. When you're seventeen you enjoy anything. Allwyn Barrack, Lewis Walker, William Schools, and George D. Clarke went too. We left here one morning about 9:00 and we spent the first night in a motel in Wilmington, Delaware. It was just about ready to fall down. Of course, back then there was no air conditioning. Hot in that place! About 2 o'clock in the morning George D. Clarke was walking down the hall with his hand up on his head and said, 'Mr. Farmer, bedbugs are in here.' And God knows, there were, too. They were crawling up and down that bed like ants. Mr. Farmer said, 'I'm certainly sorry, George D., but you'll have to make it till day.' That was the sorrowfulest place I've ever stayed in my life.

"When I felt good I enjoyed farm work. I never did mind the work much. It ties you down but a poor man has got to stay home anyway. He's got no money to spend."



Walking through Mr. Packett's barnyard was like taking a step back in time. He showed our group several pieces of horse-drawn equipment like the hay rake pictured above. We had fun guessing how some of his equipment was used. The chickens, guineas, ducks, geese, sheep, mule, and horse wandered freely around the yard which sloped down to Farnham Creek. The friendly voices of the animals, the picturesque setting, and Mr. Packett's unhurried, hospitable manner made us yearn for the good old days.

Although she celebrated her eightieth birthday on the 4th of July, Margaret Luttrell is a very busy lady. She remains active on the farm and enjoys showing her creativity by making crafts and arranging flowers. She delighted us with her childhood memories. Watching her communicate with her chickens was a rare treat. So were the bags of homemade cookies she gave each of us.

A Child's Memory of a Farm

Margaret Luttrell Remembers When

by Kathy Morse, Nathan Richards, and Michelle Schools

Margaret Luttrell

"The Luttrell family was one of the first families to settle in the Sharps area. When my father bought this farm in 1892, he paid $450 for 37 1/2 acres of woods, marsh, and six acres of open land. He started clearing the land in the wintertime and used the logs for the next winter's firewood. The pine was used for the cook stove and the oak for the King heater.

"My father farmed with just two horses and the double horse plow for tilling the land. The field crops were corn and wheat. The corn was planted by hand. The rows were checked three feet each way by single plow and horse. We put three or four grains of corn to a hill. When the stalks appeared, we children thinned it leaving two stalks to the hill. The corn was cultivated both ways. When the corn had grown some, the soil was plowed up to it and that was called 'laying the corn'.

"When the corn matured, the fodder below the ear was pulled off and tied in bunches. The tops were cut off and tied in bunches to feed the horses and cows in the winter. The corn was shucked by hand with a wooden peg to strip the shucks from the corn. We hauled the corn to the corn crib by horse and wagon. It was used to feed the hogs, horses, and cows, along with the chickens and hens. The hogs provided us with meat and lard. The hens gave us eggs and the flesh was used for food. We always had a cow to furnish us with milk and butter.

"The wheat was cut by a binder which tied it in bunches and put it in shocks until the thresher came to thresh it. There was a farmer in the area that owned both machines and was paid to harvest the small

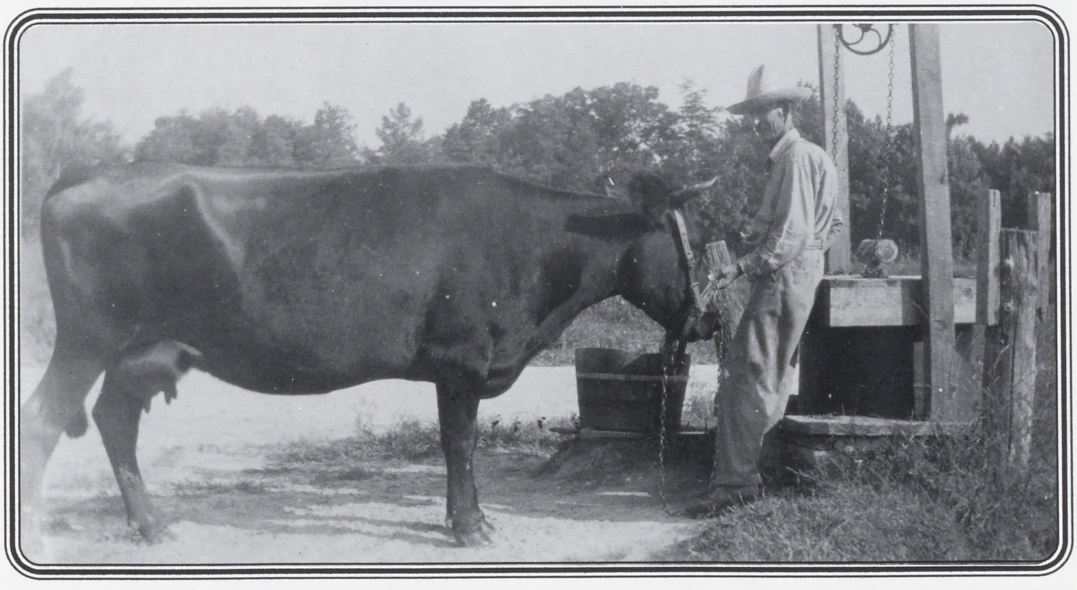
"That's my father Alfred and my brother Raymond. My father was born in 1865 and never saw his father because he was killed in the Civil War."

plots. It was a custom to feed all the wheat threshers beef and they always managed to be at our house at supper time.

"We took the wheat to the Headley's Mill near Downings to be ground into flour for bread. There were different grades of wheat--one white, and seconds which had some bran in it. The miller took out a portion of the flour for his fee. We also had corn ground for meal at the mill.

"We didn't use any chemicals on the land. All we had was horse and cow manure, and we spread it on the land for fertilizer. That's the best kind of fertilizer because it grows a garden real good.

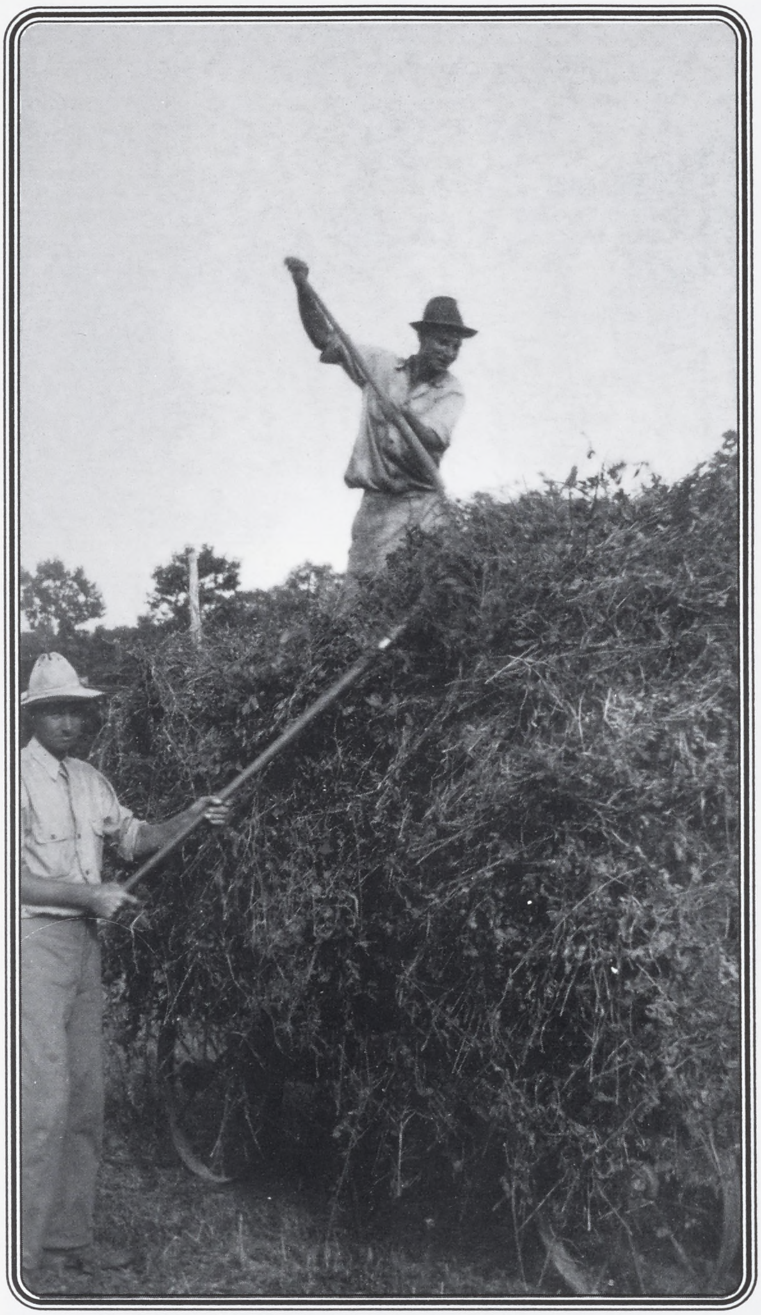
"Growing up on a farm was hard work, but we didn't know any different. I was the youngest of seven children. We went to school at Sharps in the house where Rudy Rice lives now. Then for our second year of



"We had to lead the cows and horses to the well to water them. We'd draw the water up and pour it in that tub for them to drink. The bucket was specially made to turn over when it hit the water and fill up. This is my father and his Jersey cow, Black Ghost Ace."

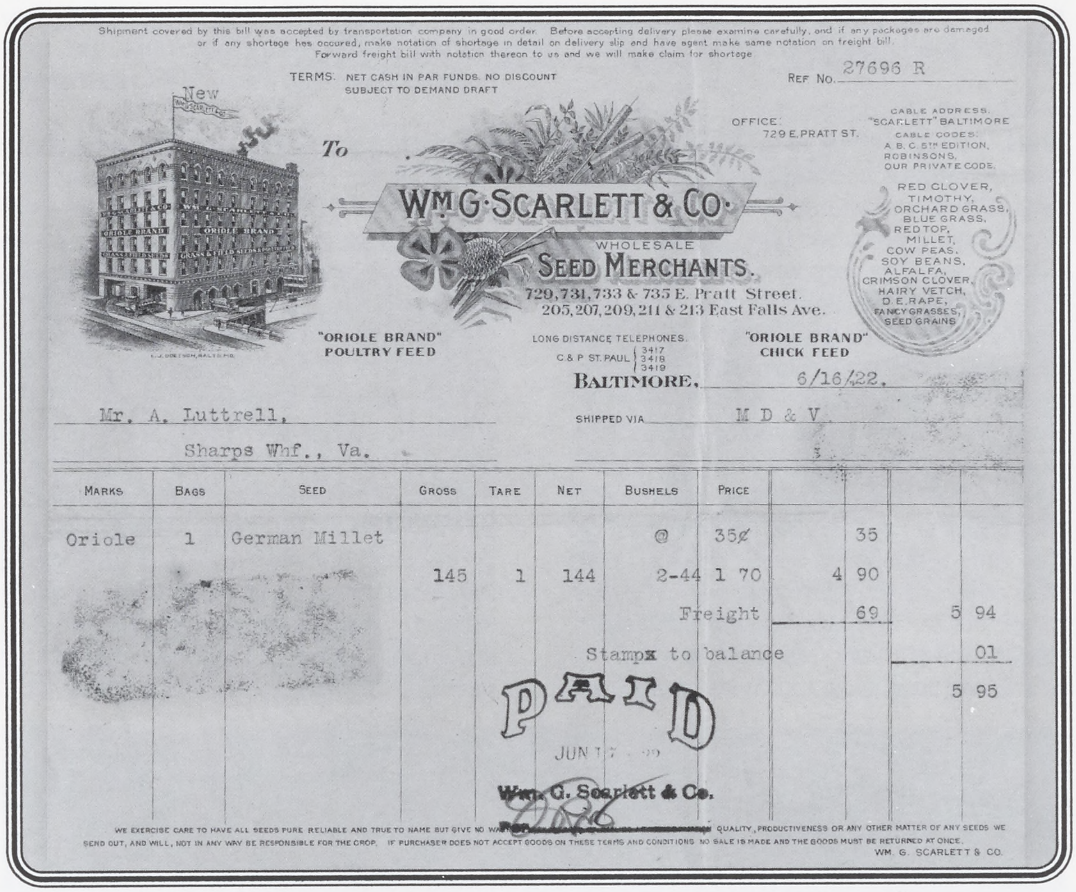
high school we started going to school at Farnham. In the mornings before school we had to feed the chickens and pack our lunch. We didn't have any lunchrooms in those days. In the afternoons when we came home we had to get the wood and kindling in, and do other chores. We never argued over the chores. We knew what we had to do. Once in a while we would sneak away and go down to the bridge to look over into the water, and we knew when we got back to the house we were going to get a spanking for it. But that didn't happen often. After supper we studied our lessons by lamplight because there was no electricity. We did have a radio later on, but not when I was going to school.

"In the summer when we weren't going to school we had to thin the corn and pick string beans. We grew string beans for five cents a half-bushel. We took them to Mr. Cook, who had a canning factory down on Farnham Creek. We had a large garden, as mother canned the fruits and vegetables and made preserves for winter. We also grew beets and green peas for market. We bunched the beets and packed the peas in barrels to ship them to Baltimore by steamboat.



"Pitching hay--a good long time ago, I guess in the 30's."

"We didn't have to buy much.
We lived off the land."



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"Our seed to sow came by steamboat from Baltimore to the wharf at Sharps."

Calves, chickens, and all other products were shipped to market by steamboat. Our seed to sow came by steamboat from Baltimore to the wharf at Sharps. We didn't have any Southern States or anything like that back then.

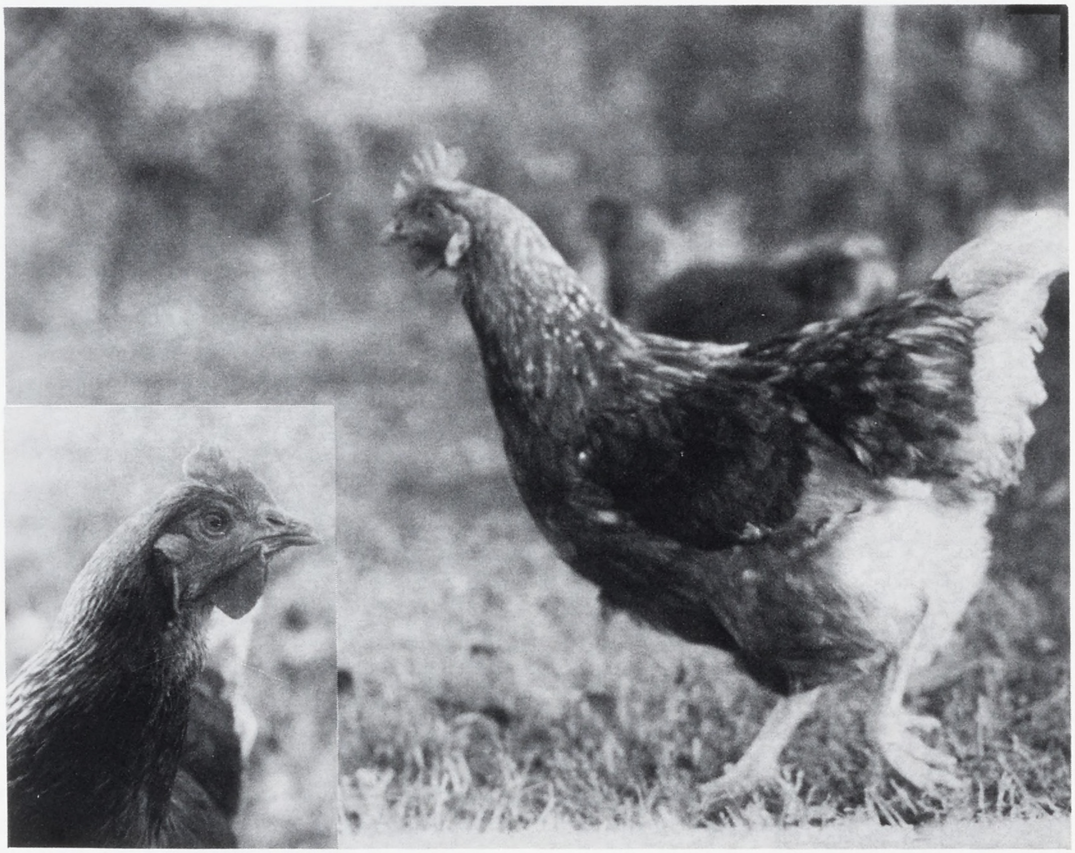
"Mother made our clothes by purchasing material from Mr. Payne's store in Sharps. He stocked everything we needed to buy, such as sugar, soap, shoes, baking powder, coffee, and salt. We raised the rest of what we needed. We didn't have to buy much. We lived off the land.

"On Saturday night we'd all get on the wagon and go to Sharps and get an ice cream cone. That was our treat for the week. We didn't go to Warsaw much. In fact, I didn't go to Warsaw until I was almost grown. We only had horses and buggies. Mr. Wilson, who was both the school teacher and minister, was the first person I knew who had an automobile. That was around 1918. The most exciting thing I can remember was the floating theater coming to Sharps Wharf. I saw my first show there around 1920. Another big event was when my brother bought his first tractor for nine hundred dollars. And getting electricity after World War II really changed our lives.

"I think farming is certainly easier now but it seems the farmers don't have as much time as my father did when he farmed with the horses. They work a lot more land now. My father got up at 4:00 A.M. and went fishing. Then he'd come back and work for the day. He'd stop before dark and then have enough time to hoe the garden. He didn't work into the night like the farmers do now. Also, farmers now don't get much more for their crops than they did in the past. A good corn crop isn't worth much.

"I have 19 young chickens, and 21 old ones. I keep a chicken for laying just one year because it won't lay much the second year. Chickens lay almost every day. From my 21 laying chickens I get 18 eggs. This is the time of the year when they molt and lose their old feathers. One of them's so nappy she needs a sweater. If you feed them good and treat them right you get an egg a day from each chicken. Now if you don't treat them right you won't get the egg. I get good sized brown eggs. Sometimes when the young ones start laying they'll give a double yolk. Before I put up this new fence they used to find a hole every day and they seemed to know where to get out at. The other day about a half a dozen of the young ones got behind the fence and they tried to come through the fence. When they saw me coming they started singing, 'I'm over here, I'm over here!' So I opened the gate and let them in.

"I really enjoy the chickens. It's not a chore for me at all. They're company. I can pick out some of them but not all. My favorite one is Bobbie. I call her that because she got her tail feathers plucked out and she was a bobtail for a long time. She comes to me more than the others. The chickens get along pretty well except when they go to roost at night. Everyone wants to get in a certain corner and they pluck at each other to move over. I get new chickens in April at Southern States. You get 25 chickens if you buy the feed. As soon as the young chickens start laying, I'll give Milton the older ones. He gets them already trained. A chicken will live from three to five years, but the oldest ones may not lay as well."



"Bobbie's looking for something. Come on. Come here, girl. Say something."

Tanglewood Eggs, Inc.
A Family Affair

By Lauren Block, Lesley Lowery and Crystal Simpson

Tanglewood Eggs, Inc., owned and operated by Earl Lewis and his family, has been providing the area with eggs and produce for over 40 years. The company distributes eggs and fresh vegetables throughout parts of Maryland and Virginia year round. During the local growing season, the company raises produce on its own farm, which was purchased by Mr. Lewis in 1951.

In order to get a close look at the company's operations, our staff visited two locations: the main office in Haynesville and Tanglewood Farm located in Tidewater. At the main office, where he works with his sister Pam Hinson, Johnny Lewis gave us an insight into the day to day routine at the Haynesville branch of Tanglewood Eggs, Inc. When we visited the farm, Earl Warren Lewis gave us free rein to explore and observe the goings on there. We saw workers picking, cleaning, packing, and weighing produce for market. We were even treated to fresh "Tanglewood" watermelon.

The Lewis family: Earl Warren Lewis, Charlotte Lewis, Earl Lewis, Pam Hinson and Johnny Lewis

at Haynesville . . .
with Johnny Lewis

"We start the day by loading the refrigerated trucks. We sometimes load the night before, to get ahead. If there isn't much produce, we load in the morning. Our trucks usually leave any time between two and six in the morning, depending on their destination. After we see the trucks off, we begin making calls to customers to see what they need and we start getting our orders together. After we have made the calls, we start packing up for the next day and get the paperwork caught up. We have a lot of regulations to keep up with. Our trucks have to comply with Department

Johnny Lewis gave our staff a tour of the refrigerated storage area at the office in Haynesville. We were also treated to fresh strawberries, which were delicious.

of Transportation regulations, and our produce is regulated by the F.D.A. and the health department.

"We are set up to sell mainly to stores and restaurants. The restaurants start ordering right away when we begin to get in our fresh vegetables. Recently we have started selling produce directly to the public. From 9 to 5 daily, anyone can come here to buy fresh fruits and veggies.

"In the winter time, we get produce from Florida and California. It's hard to get everything from one place so we have to hunt around. We have to give people a service; that's what this really is, a service. We supply them with what they use. If we don't have it, we go get it. We may have to pick up four times a week in order to be able to deliver what our customers need. One of our greatest benefits in being a local operation is that we are able to get somebody something quickly.

"When the season really gets going and the farm starts producing, that's murder for me. Sometimes I work 18 hours a day, seven days a week. There is so much produce swamping in. They are picking, grading, and packing every day, and most of it comes through here, although some of the produce is trucked directly to its destination from the farm. The produce that comes through here is either packed in our refrigerated trailers or put in storage.

"Supply and demand really rule the produce market. If we can supply something that no one else has, then we're in business. If everybody else has it, then it's a buyer's market. Produce is a pretty quality conscious business. There is always second hand stuff around, but it doesn't pay to deal with it."

at Tanglewood Farm . . .
with Earl Warren Lewis

Earl Warrren Lewis carefully examines a tomato for water damage.

"We raise yellow squash, zucchini squash, some cucumbers, tomatoes, cantaloupes, watermelons, bell peppers, hot peppers, potatoes, and pumpkins. We used to raise some sweet corn, but you can't raise everything, you just can't handle it all. If you raise a lot of corn, you need a hydro cooler, to cool it right then after it's been picked to take the heat out of it. Also, it comes in the same time as cantaloupes and tomatoes and you can't handle everything. So you make a choice on what you want to do. We did away with sweet corn.

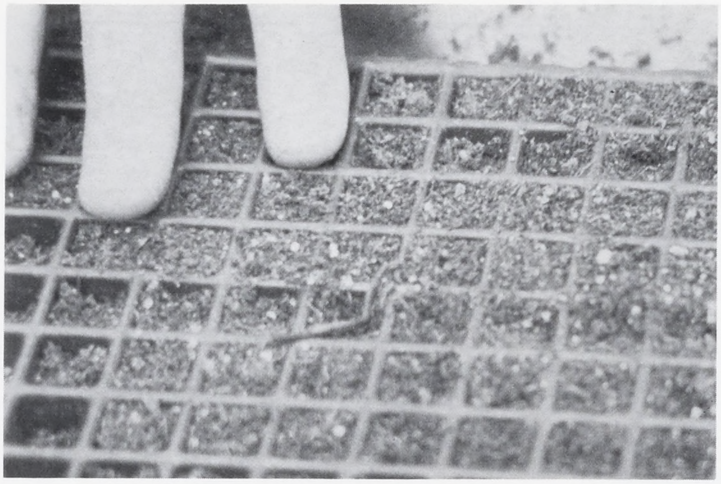
"We don't raise anything unless we have a market set up for it. You've got to have your market. It doesn't work otherwise. Setting up your market is the first thing you do.

"We are always trying new varieties. They are always coming out with something different, different taste, or a plant that is resistant to disease. We try a little and see. We get new ideas when we attend seminars for people and companies dealing with produce. Rosser Cobb is helping us with the 'Virginia's Finest' promotion. We are working with the Northern Neck Vegetable Growers Association; we want to start promoting vegetables for the state of Virginia. We are setting requirements and standards dealing with quality and size. We're just getting started, but we're growing all the time.

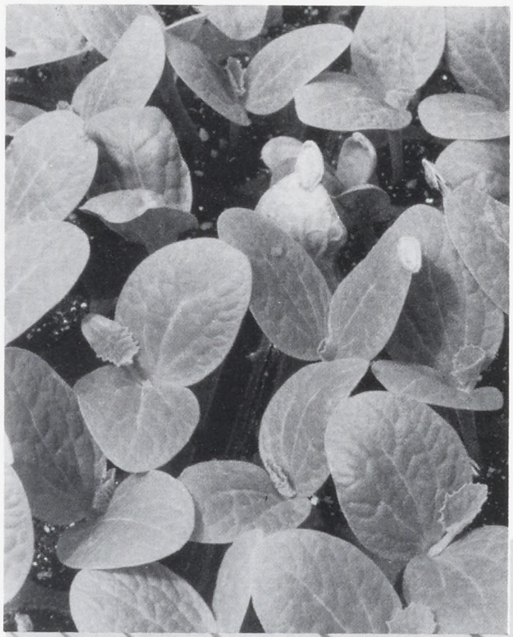
"We started growing our own plants in our greenhouses in 1991. We used to buy all our plants but sometimes it was hard to get just the plants we wanted so we decided to try growing them ourselves. All this was new to us.

"We start seeding around the 5th of March. We seed tomatoes first, since it takes longer for them to get ready. We seed tomatoes in these little trays. Each tray holds 500, one seed per hole. Do you know how small a tomato seed is? It's a job! It takes a lot of time, but it's not too bad. It's work, like anything else. We water them every day and they come up in little plugs and we set them out in larger pots and then they go in the field. We have to heat the greenhouses when we first start seeding. A plastic pipe distributes the heat evenly throughout the house.

Earl Lewis has been in the egg and produce business for over forty years.



Tray used for seeding tomato plants holds 500 seedlings.

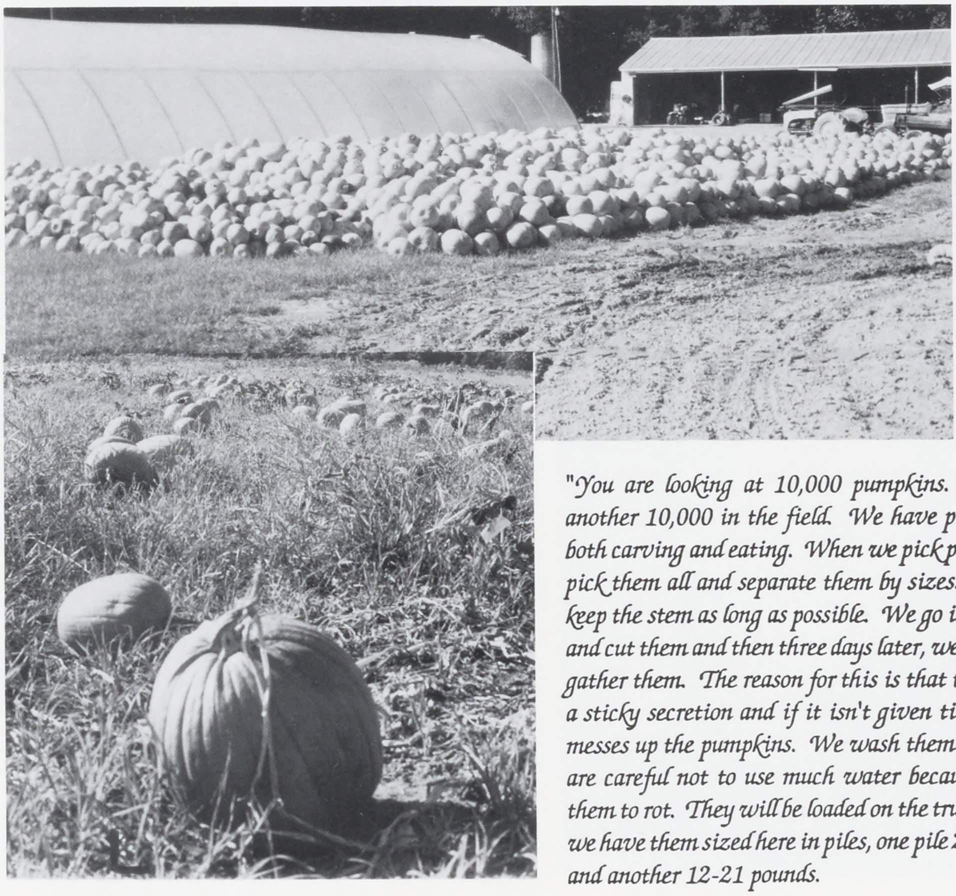


"Seeding squash begins less than two weeks before they'll be planted in the field. We seed 72 plants to the tray. We place the seedlings on a wagon before they are planted to toughen them up and get them used to the atmosphere, so it won't be such a shock. They've been babied in the greenhouse. From the time you seed them to the time you begin picking will be 30-35 days. We keep a record on a calendar of seeding dates from year to year. Planting dates change due to weather. If the weather forecast is calling for frost for 4-5 days, then we'll delay planting. We plant about 3,000 plants per acre.

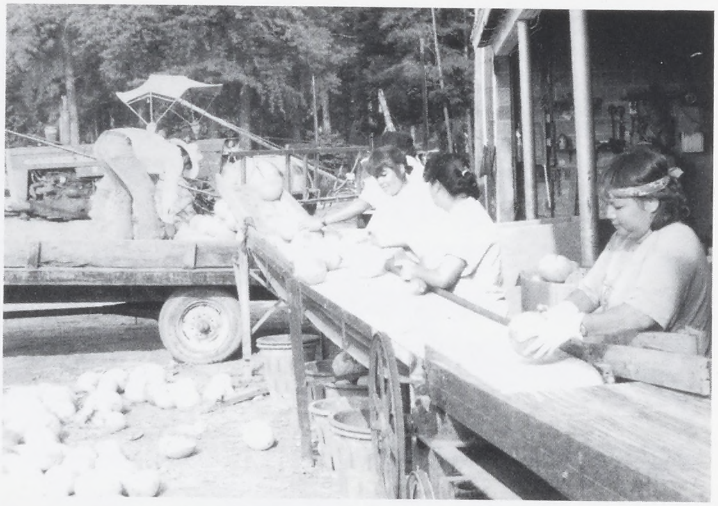
Pepper plants are planted in plastic mulch, which creates a greenhouse effect for the plants. During cool nights early in the growing season, it retains much of the day's heat. It also helps to retain moisture and keep down weed growth.

"When do we plant? Well that depends. We have planted as early as the 12th of April. That's kind of early and you're taking right much of a chance. Normally it's around the 20th of April. You watch the weather and if it is going to be warm for a week or so you plant. If you get the plants out in the field close to a week in fairly warm weather and they catch root and start taking on, they'll go on. They can stand a little bit of cold weather or a little frost. But I have had to go back and reset because of cold weather.

"We have had irrigation for over 10 years now. The system can irrigate about five acres at a time. Also, we have to spray every 7-10 days for pests.



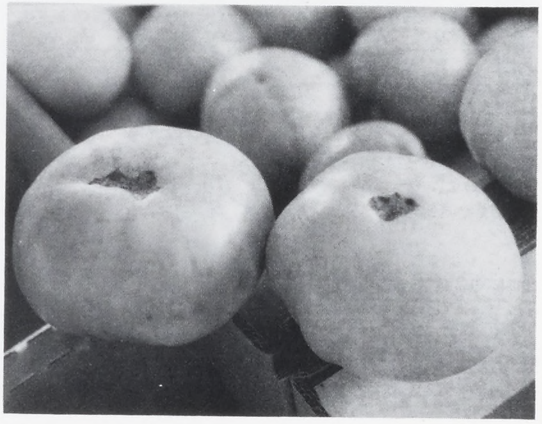
"You are looking at 10,000 pumpkins. There are another 10,000 in the field. We have pumpkins for both carving and eating. When we pick pumpkins we pick them all and separate them by sizes. We try to keep the stem as long as possible. We go into the field and cut them and then three days later, we go back and gather them. The reason for this is that the stem has a sticky secretion and if it isn't given time to dry it messes up the pumpkins. We wash them if dirty, but are careful not to use much water because it causes them to rot. They will be loaded on the truck by size so we have them sized here in piles, one pile 2-10 pounds, and another 12-21 pounds.



The cantaloupes are brought in by the wagon load and are washed off. Although they are grown on plastic, they still get dirty. After washing, they are sorted by size and variety, and are counted and boxed. Culls are discarded.

Both yellow and zucchini squash are raised. The squash are picked, washed, and packed by sizes.

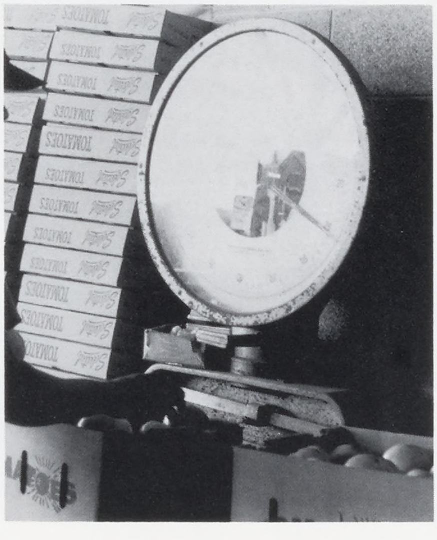
Baskets of cherry tomatoes



"Our early tomatoes had too many cat-faces. That's just a real ugly tomato. There is a hole or a knot in the center, some say caused by the bloom sticking on them. We try not to bring any in from the field, but we get some. They would be considered number twos, but we don't pack many number twos. They taste the same. Some people don't mind the appearance, but most do. Many who complain when they see farmers spraying, won't buy a tomato with a blemish on it. Everybody buys by looks, I guess.

"The tomatoes are picked pink in the field, loaded in baskets on wagons and brought to the packing shed. They are run by conveyor belt under a sprayer, which puts a little bit of water on them to clean them. Fine brushes rotating in opposite directions take the dirt off the tomatoes. The sprayer has sponges inside to dry the tomatoes and a flat roller squeezes the water out of the sponges. They need to be dry.

"On the table the small tomatoes fall through and are discarded with the culls. Culls are tomatoes that are blistered, leaking or ugly. If there has been too much rain, many tomatoes must be discarded. The rain may cause bad cracks or the tomatoes are too soft and won't hold like they should. Further down the belt, the medium size tomatoes fall through and are boxed. All that remains at the end of the table are the large or 'number one' tomatoes. They are sorted by color, orange, pink, and red and are packed 25 pounds net weight. So if the box weighs 1 1/2 pounds, we must make sure the total weight is 26 1/2 to 27 pounds. After weighing, the boxes are sent to the office at Haynesville and from there to their delivery destination."



The traditional farms with cows and chickens and fields of wheat and corn have witnessed the arrival of alternative crops and farming methods. Alternative agriculture has found its place in Richmond County. Our staff visited one such farm, Historyland Nursery, located in the Newland area. Mr. Thomas Huggins, one of the owners of the nursery, took time from his hectic schedule to show us the farm and explain his nursery operation.

A Look at Alternative Agriculture

Touring Historyland Nursery with Thomas Huggins

by Lauren Block, Mary Haywood, Kathy Morse, Sara Packett, Nathan Richards, Amanda Sanders, Crystal Simpson

Q: When did you get started in the nursery business?
A: I started in the business with my father around 1975, at a weak moment, I guess. We were landscape contractors before, and then we started growing plants, and the business looked good. We went about it slowly at first because there was a lot to learn. I like plants, but I'm not in the nursery business because I like plants. It's a business and you have to treat it that way. I grow a lot of plants that personally I wouldn't give you 10 cents for three acres of them. But when I look at the delivery truck and it's loaded with those plants, I like them. You've got to grow what the market wants.

Q: How long is your day?
A: I usually get over here at 6:00 A.M. and go home at 6:00 in the evening. This business is kind of like a dairy. Someone has to be here all the time. There are enough of us that we can take turns leaving for a week or so of vacation. But there are certain times of the year when nobody can go anywhere, and everyone understands that. We do very little in January and February, but the rest of the time we are busy.

Q: How is this type of farming considered different from the more traditional farm?
A: We employ 25 people on this farm of only 250 acres. To employ 25 people on a farm raising beans and corn, you'd have to have about 5000 acres. The nursery covers about 80 acres of the farm, and of that, only about 40 acres are under sprinklers. It's also different because we have to create our own market. For most agricultural products, you already have a market with set prices. Since we don't have a market, we sometimes have to predict what and how much we'll grow. Sometimes we guess wrong and have to throw a lot of plants away.

Q: Isn't that risky?
A: Yes, but usually the greater the risk in a business, the greater the potential reward. This business is expensive to get into. Just to develop the forty acres of land we are using, we've probably spent about $10,000 an acre on irrigation, gravel, greenhouses, and that kind of thing. So the return has to be a little bit better. Like produce, it potentially can be a lot more lucrative than beans and corn, unless you have hailstorms and bad weather. In other words, there is a great deal of risk; you have to worry about the weather, the economy, and the market.

Q: How do you create your market?

A: That takes a lot of time. You have to make a lot of contacts, and we've been doing it for 20 years. We go to trade shows, make personal visits, and produce and mail catalogs. We try to figure out what the market wants even four years from now. We have to guess that far ahead because some plants take four or five years to grow. There are some staples that we know we are going to sell a certain number of, and beyond that we have to guess. We provide a real good service that makes us competitive and this is important to the business. A landscape contractor or garden center can call us on Monday and we'll have his shipment delivered by Wednesday. The big nurseries in California, Georgia, and Florida are our biggest competitors, but they can't deliver here that fast. It takes them two weeks.

Q: Who are your customers?

A: We deal with retailers, garden centers, and landscape contractors. Most of our market is to contractors who do parking lots and shopping centers, that kind of thing. About 80% of our market lies within 25 miles of Washington and the Baltimore Beltway. We sell as far north as Connecticut and Massachusetts and as far west as Ohio and Missouri. Nothing goes to the South because they have a longer growing season there, and they can grow plants a little cheaper.

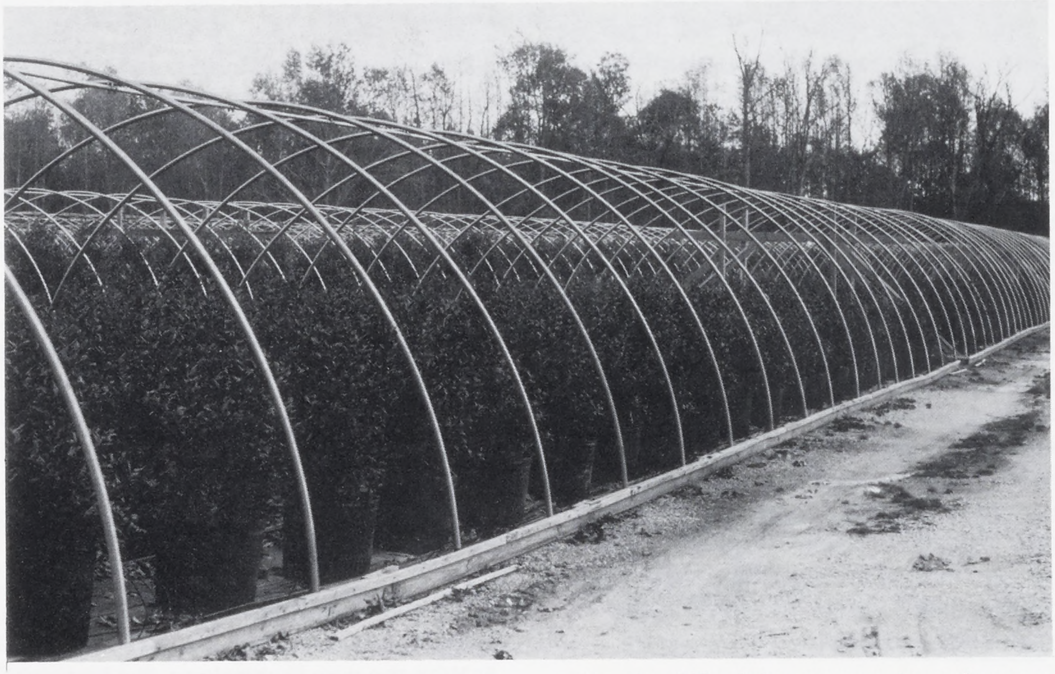
Q: How do you ship the plants?

A: We have our own trucks and they all have shelves. We stack the plants on the shelves instead of putting them on top of each other because they can get damaged that way. The plants go on the trucks just like they were sitting on the table, and they look good when they come off the truck. You don't have to wait a couple days for them to regain their shape.

Q: Do you have to deal with many changes in the business?

A: With the new technology, the business is changing all the time. For example, they are in the process of developing a fertilizer that will be released by sound vibrations. It is put in the mix, and when a certain frequency whistle is blown, the fertilizer is released. We are finding better and cheaper ways to grow plants.

The Historyland Nursery trucks are equipped with shelves so the plants can be delivered without damage.



Q: How many greenhouses do you have?
A: I have about 400 greenhouses which we made ourselves. We have a pipe bender that bends the straight pipe we buy to make the frames for the houses. We buy bark that is specially ground for us, and then we compost it. We use white plastic to cover the houses because clear plastic would make it too hot during the day and too cold at night.

Q: How are the greenhouses used?
A: Some of them are used for propagation where we might have 16,000 plants in one house. We produce about 80% of our product ourselves. We take cuttings, root them, and grow them in the field for two years before we market them. We buy some cuttings because they are difficult to root. Our rhododendrons were produced from tissue culture because some of them are nearly impossible to propagate by conventional methods. Rhododendrons are also very susceptible to disease, and the lab can produce them without any virus. Growing by tissue culture is where you take a few cells off the plant and grow them in a test tube. In just a few weeks, you can have hundreds of plants started. If a plant is difficult to propagate or is a new variety, it is more profitable to do it this way. Instead of taking 15 years to get in the market, you can do it in a matter of months.

Q: What do you do with the cuttings?
A: In August or September, we put the cuttings in a tray. After they root, we break them off and put them in a peat moss mix. They'll stay there until the last of April. Then we take them out and put them in three gallon pots where they will grow for about two years. As soon as we don't have to worry about frost, the plants are moved to the field. The plants are set on black plastic which slows the drainage, keeps the weeds down, and keeps the plants cooler than gravel. In the fall, they are moved back into the houses. Around the last week in February, we pull the shade cloth off, turn the heat up, and the plant thinks, "Today, it's spring." We push them and put the growth on them. This year, it has been a good growing season. We didn't have any late freezes, we've had plenty of rain, and it wasn't really hot. I think we may add more houses, but we'll have to move somewhere else because we only feel comfortable with our water supply at our present size.

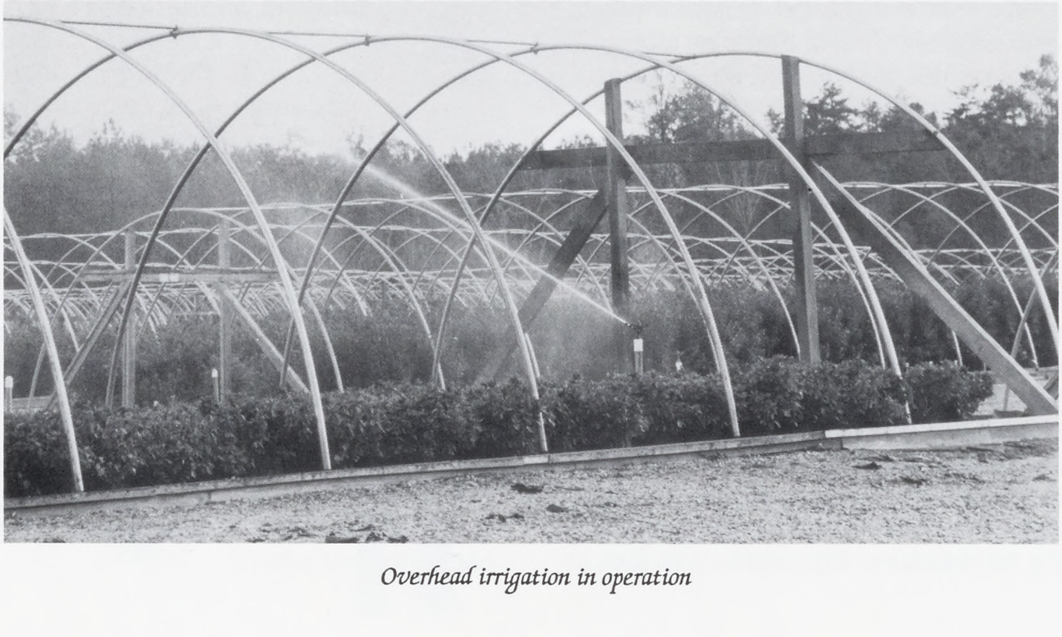
The ponds, built to provide a source for the irrigation system, enhance the beauty of the landscape.

Q: How do you supply water for the nursery?

A: We built two ponds which provide the water we use for irrigation. One pond doesn't have any natural flow. We fill it up and if we ever need it, we'll have it. The bottom elevation of this pond is the same of the top elevation of the other one. We have a pipe with a valve in it, so we can drain water easily to the other pond if we need to.

Q: How does your irrigation system work?

A; We use two methods of irrigation, overhead irrigation and drip irrigation. All of the water is chlorinated. Even though we can water all we want, we still have to worry about summer heat. When the temperature soars above 90, we start to lose some roots and the plants won't grow. All of our runoff from the irrigation goes right back into the ponds. The way the land lays, everything eventually goes back into the ponds.



Overhead irrigation in operation

Mr. Huggins points out that three drips are used to ensure that plants are fertilized uniformly.

Q: How do you fertilize such a large number of plants?

A: Sometimes we inject liquid fertilizers into our main irrigation line to fertilize plants. We also put dry fertilizer on the plants. This fertilizer is covered with a plastic-like coating. Water will move inside the coating, dissolving the fertilizer and releasing it slowly. Depending on how thick the coating is, you can get fertilizer to last from one month to two years.

Q: The plants have such pretty shapes. How do you keep them that way?

A: We trim the plants. Different plants require different trims. Some we trim three or four times a year, and others twice a year. The spring flux is always the heaviest and you get three or four breaks on it, so we try to get a good flux and then just trim the plants as they need it.

Q: What about diseases?

A: Diseases give us trouble all the time. There is always something new. We use a lot of things other than just chemicals to treat the diseases because everyone is so concerned about the environment. We can inject nematodes right into the water to kill certain insect larvae. Once a week three of us will walk the whole place looking for diseases. Sometimes we'll look at just about every plant out here. Occasionally, we have lost large amounts of plants due to disease. We've also sprayed whole blocks of plants with the wrong chemical or sprayed them at the wrong time of day when it was too hot and killed them all. Fortunately, this doesn't happen too often because you gradually learn what to look for. When something is off, you know it real quick. When trouble is detected early, you can do something about it. The state has a nursery inspector who comes once a year and is here for at least two weeks. He does the same thing we do, looking for disease and insects, and he makes a list of everything he finds. If he finds certain diseases, we have to throw that whole block of plants away. This helps us because we want to sell healthy, not diseased, plants.

Q: What are the biggest weather problems you have?

A: Hail will bother the plants, but it's not the worst problem. Heat and cold are the worst weather problems. Then there is the timing. For example, if you have a real warm fall and you don't get any frost until the first week of November, and instead of getting a frost, the temperature goes down to 17 degrees, that is disastrous. That happened last year.

The peaceful serenity of an evening landscape is a relaxing sight after a long, busy day at Historyland Nursery.

Q: This looks like a lot of hard work. What do you do for relaxation?

A: This can be somewhat of a high pressured occupation. When the work has to be done, it has to be done. So when we do have free time, we manage to find ways to play a little bit. I enjoy raising Texas longhorns. We sell a few and eat a few. With the longhorns, you never know what kind of horn configuration you're going to get, and that makes raising them an interesting hobby. We also have some horses. My daughter rides. I ride a little, but mostly I clean out the stalls. We also have some wild geese that come in to our ponds. We feed them and enjoy watching them.

Kelly Liddington:
A Friend to Farmers

by Mary Haywood, Lesley Lowery, Kathy Morse, Sara Packett, Nathan Richards, Amanda Sanders, Michelle Schools, Michelle Self, Crystal Simpson, and Michael Yerby

Kelly Liddington is the Richmond County Extension Agent. He is a valuable source of information for local farmers and has been very instrumental in reviving the Richmond County Fair. Our staff visited with him to get some ideas about agriculture in Richmond County. Mr. Liddington provided us with some interesting details about the history of farming in Richmond County as well as information about current farming practices and trends in the future. His answers to our many questions were helpful as we researched for this volume of ***Close Ties.***

"If we go back to colonial times and look at the types of agriculture we had when the county was founded, we see a sustenance type of farming. Everybody farmed to sustain themselves. We are looking at a system for survival. If there was a crop failure, there was a hardship. If the wheat crop was destroyed or bugs got in their potato patches, people did without. In those times, it wasn't unusual for some weather event like late frost or drought to affect the whole region, and the whole area would have no crop. They couldn't allocate extra money to run to the store like we do. People bartered to get what they needed. They might trade a box full of chickens for a baby pig. Trading was not only the way that you had to go about getting things; it was an art. We still have some pretty shrewd traders here in the county.

"The equipment that colonial farmers used was very, very simple. Labor was the cheapest and most readily available input. Young children worked in the fields with the adults. These farmers had to be creative to compensate for the disadvantages and hardships they suffered.

A colonial farmer's equipment was limited. Right, a team of yoked oxen pull an ox cart as the farmer surveys his tobacco crop.

"Even though today's farmer has the advantages of advanced technology, equipment, and knowledge, he also faces some hardships. Today, at least 3/4 of the market value of the grain that the farmer sells has already been spent. Three-fourths of the value of the crop a farmer sells is tied up in costs when he planted, fertilized, and sprayed the crops, and even when he bought the equipment to work it with. When the fellows are harvesting wheat and making $3.00 a bushel, that may seem like a pretty good price. But when they carry it to the market, they lose money. For every dollar you spend at the store, the farmer gets three cents. Three cents out of every loaf of bread goes to the farmer. Back even 50 years ago, bread was five cents a loaf and 2 1/2 cents of it went to the farmer. Fifty years ago we were looking at $2.50 per bushel for wheat. So there is just that little bit of difference in the price that the farmer receives, but we've seen prices at the store go up phenomenally.

"That is one of the reasons why today the average age of the farmer in this county is nearly 59 years old. We are down to 60-70 full-time farmers. Most of the farms have an average size of 500 acres. We do have some operations working over 1000 acres of land, and one or two close to 1500 acres. As far as investments, on the average 500 acre farm, we are easily looking at over a half million dollars in assets. Assets are the physical material things, such as cows and tractors, used to generate income. I said that a farmer is working with over 1/2 million dollars in assets. Does that mean that his net worth is 1/2 million dollars? No, because liability is always a biggy on most of these farms. The level of indebtedness is very, very high. For each acre of corn, you're looking at an average of $225 in expenses. The return depends on whether or not we get rain. Doesn't that make wonderful sense? You can do everything right, but if it doesn't rain, you don't get anything. You spend $225 an acre and put out 100 acres of corn. That's 20 grand you've got sitting out there, waiting for rain.

"Most farmers also have another source of income. They may drive a school bus or have a spouse who works. It's now a nationwide trend for part-time farming. I don't know if we're going towards fewer bigger farms or more specialized consumer-oriented marketing systems. We are already seeing more and more alternative agriculture enterprises. Some alternatives being explored in the county are growing alternative crops such as lavender, operating large nurseries, producing organically, and breeding rare animals for collectors. There's a market for breeding rare stock for collectors.

"A farm is a wonderful place to grow up! It's a great place for parents to raise kids. The youngsters learn to work hard. When I was teaching, I had lots less trouble from the farm kids than anybody else because those kids knew how to work. One of the biggest problems today is that young people don't have enough sense of responsibility. Farm kids have to feed their animals every day. They develop a sense of responsibility. They are not necessarily getting rich, but they have a nice lifestyle. Unfortunately, many of today's farmers have kids that don't want to farm.

"This year I organized an Agricultural 4-H Club to generate more interest in farming and to involve youngsters in agricultural projects. The club meets monthly, and many of our meetings have been held on farms where the kids can have hands-on experiences. Several of the club members are preparing projects for the county fair. As a boy, I was a 4-Her and raised animals for various shows. It is a rewarding experience to stand beside a prize animal to pose for a picture. I would like to see more Richmond County youth experience this feeling."

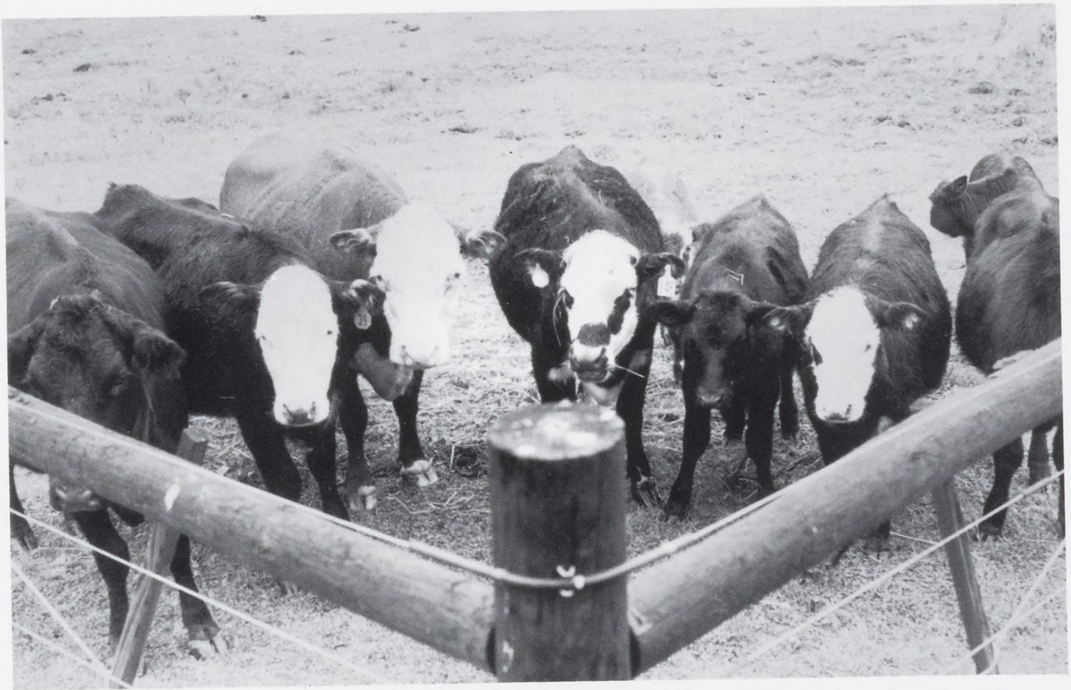
> "What's good about farming? It's a wonderful place to grow up! Kids learn to work hard."

THE THOMASES WELCOME 4-H CLUB TO THEIR FARM

In October, the 4-H Club met at the home of Richard and Sinka Thomas. Kelly Liddington explained agriculture project details to members and parents.

Richard and David Thomas raised their pet sheep Cinderella from a baby after she was orphaned. Even though she's a pet, she has become one of the family and thinks she's a human. The boys' faces show how they feel about growing up on a farm.

Richard Thomas, standing in front of the wagon, took the club members on a hayride tour of his farm. Despite the cold and windy weather, everyone huddled together and enjoyed the ride.



Even the cattle were friendly and lined up to greet the 4-Hers during a brief stop on their hayride.

by Kathy Morse

Today's Pickins

48 Hours on a Truck Farm

When most people think about how a youth spends his or her summer, they think of time spent sleeping in or "hanging out." Kathy Morse has a different story though. As the daughter of Randolph and Louise Morse, her life is anything but simple. The Morses operate a truck farm located on the Rappahannock River, near Newland, Va. They have been farming for 25 years. With 35 acres of land, their farming season runs from spring to late fall.

Look at 'em shine.

Imagine reaching that most enjoyable moment of sleep and then the alarm goes off. It's six o'clock. I groggily climb out of bed as the smell of coffee drifts up the stairs. I quickly snap back into reality by the hustle and bustle of people moving about downstairs. Within a few minutes, I find myself outside loading baskets on the trucks and getting ready to head for the fields.

When the other workers and I first reach the fields, we are divided into small groups. Each group is assigned a certain task such as picking tomatoes, corn, peppers, watermelons, or cantaloupes. This helps things run smoothly.

Corn is usually the first priority because corn will "go through a heat" and spoil. Next, tomatoes are picked by size and color depending on the orders that have been placed and the urgency of the order. This usually takes from one to four hours. After the tomatoes are picked, we move on to squash, which has to be picked with the greatest care. Depending on the rate of growth, squash is usually picked every other day. From squash, we go to the cucumbers and peppers, which are also picked every other day.

Kathy finds a smiling face and pleasant disposition help boost sales at the market.

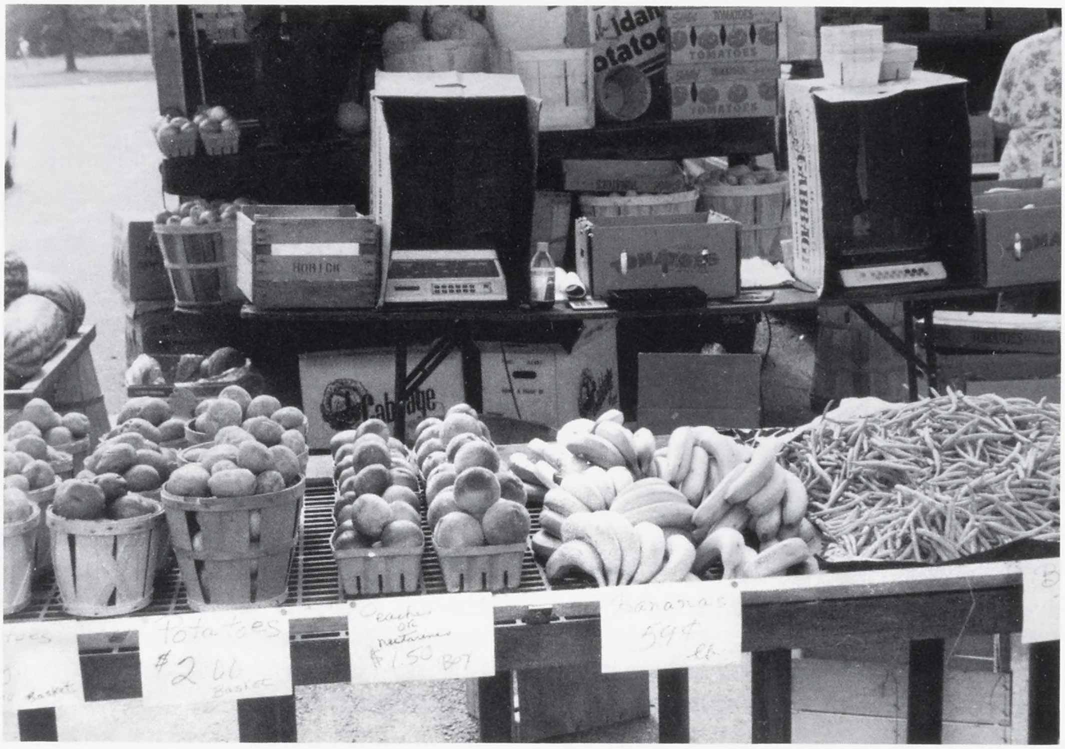
The farm, which supplies other produce stand operators, is often called on for rush orders. This truck load of melons is ready to go.

As lunch time grows near, all of the day's "pickins" are loaded on the trucks. After this process we head to the shed where baskets are unloaded and we break for lunch. Now half the crew heads back to pick watermelons and cantaloupes while the rest of us start to wipe tomatoes by hand, make boxes, and pack up the tomatoes. We sort the tomatoes by size and color and pack them into 25 pound boxes. One person is responsible for weighing the produce and placing the right tops on each box. These boxes are placed on corresponding pallets so specific orders are easily found. The whole tomato packing process takes about four hours. Next, it's time to wash the squash and cucumbers. When the produce is dry enough to be packed, we sort it by size and pack it.

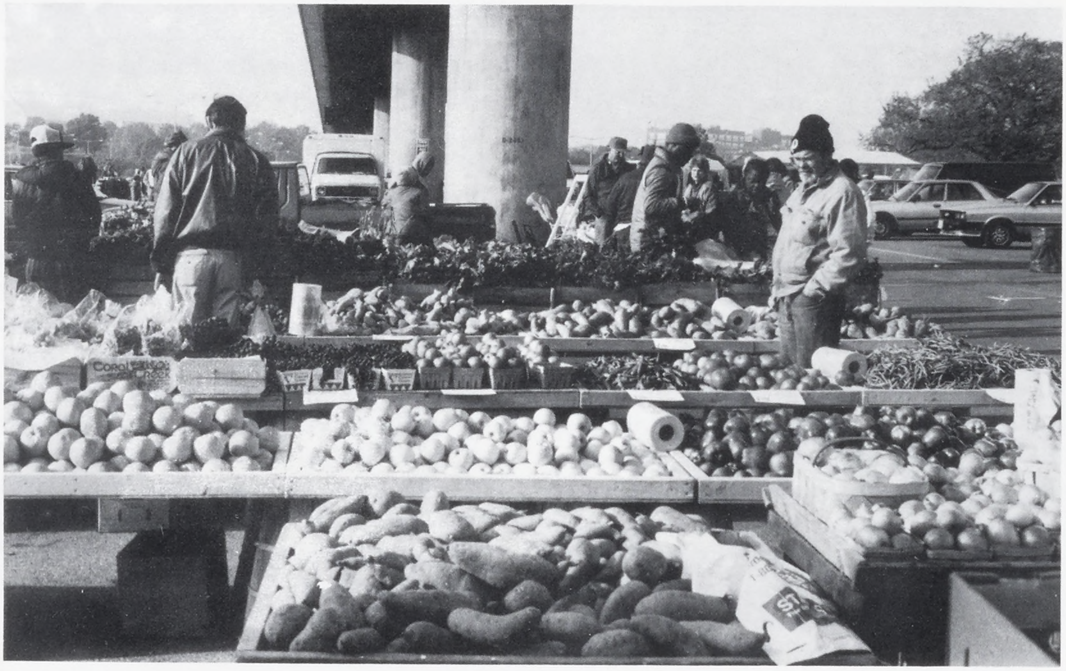
By now the other crew has just returned from the fields with trucks filled with melons of all sizes. While the melons are wiped clean of dirt, the men load bins on the delivery trucks. Some of the crew begin to crate corn, four dozen ears to the crate, while the others load watermelons and cantaloupes into the bins. Boxes of produce are loaded according to the order of deliveries. By now it is pitch dark outside and the trucks are being fueled up for the long haul. We head inside about nine and we are too tired to cook, so we send out for dinner. About eleven o'clock I finally get my turn in the shower. But before I can get into bed, I have to get the sales tickets and change ready for tomorrow's trip to the market. Finally, I climb into bed exhausted. But I won't be there for long because I have to get up at 3:00 A.M.

At 3:00, a whole new day begins. With only three or four hours of sleep, I find it pretty difficult to adjust to my surroundings. We cut off all the lights as we leave the house and make a final check to see that everything is securely loaded on the truck. I climb into the cab of the truck and get ready for the long ride to Washington, D.C. There we will meet the other farm workers who left last night around 11:30 to make deliveries in Maryland. By now, my eyes will hardly stay open but I try to keep them open to help the driver stay awake.

After about two hours of driving, our truck finally reaches the old farmers' market where produce such as onions, potatoes, and bananas are bought wholesale. Tomatoes are also sold wholesale, or in great quantity, to vendors who own produce stands. As far as I can see, there are streets lined with wholesale businesses that sell to commercial restaurants. The time spent waiting for the market at R.F.K. Stadium to open is used to purchase bags and a cup of coffee.



The Morse family takes their produce to the Open Air Farmers' Market, located at R.F.K. Stadium in Washington, D.C. Stand holders must be certified as farmers, raise at least 80% of their total produce, and pay monthly fees. The Market Master monitors produce trucks as they arrive . At larger stands customers must help themselves and pay at the back of the stand. The Morse's stand has a more personal touch. Customers receive individual attention as they make their purchases.



Around 6:00, we climb back in the truck and head through the city towards R.F.K., home of the Redskins, to set up our retail produce stand. The sun is still rising, ever so slowly, when the gates to the parking lot are opened and we make our way across the lot to our designated spot. The doors of the trucks are raised to the frequent sound of yawns from the sleepy crew. Portable plastic tables are then set up and produce is placed in convenient spots on them. Since quality, cleanliness, and an array of colors draw customers to the stand, we arrange the produce in an eye-catching display. Even though this may take a long time, it is surprising how many more customers prefer spending their money at an attractive display rather than a stand that was put up in five minutes.

When the stand is finally set up, customers start arriving by carloads. To the residents of the District of Columbia, this market is the only place they can go to get fresh produce at reasonable prices.

Not only do farmers bring their produce here, but vendors also set up commercial food stands around the parking lot. The variety of products brings people from all over the country here to shop. Even though the market is open on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, the biggest crowds are drawn here on Saturdays.

On a typical Saturday in Washington, we usually have five to six people working the stand. It can be very frustrating, and at times the weather is so hot and humid, I often think that 5:00, quitting time, will never come! Only the friendly faces of the satisfied customers help me look at things in a different perspective to get through the afternoon.

By lunch time, I am really given out and can't wait for my turn to rest. After a morning full of stocking tables and carrying produce to cars, it feels good to sit down for five minutes and relax. When my five minutes are up, it's back to "the same ole grind."

Slowly, 5:00 rolls around. I am overwhelmed with a new surge of energy. We pack the produce back in the original boxes and load the melons back into the bins. One person sweeps the space after everything is loaded on the trucks while others make sure everything is secured and the trucks are running right.

Now we are on our way back home. With no air conditioners in the trucks, riding down the road on a humid afternoon can be very uncomfortable. Another two hours pass as we make our way back through Virginia. I can almost imagine the relief of a cold shower and soft bed. Then I am brought back to reality when I remember I have to get up at 6:00 the next morning to start the routine all over again. But when I imagine how I'm going to spend this week's paycheck, it's all worth it.

Kathy's brother Glenn promotes his new sales pitch.

Our staff visited with Mr. Joe Hicks at Lansdowne Farm which is part of the Mt. Airy Farm. Lansdowne is a portion of the original land grant from the King of England to the Fauntleroy family. Today, the Tayloe family owns the property, which they acquired in 1680. Originally operated by slave labor, the farm was eventually leased to white tenant farmers. Tenant farmers worked under an agreement with the land owners. Two-thirds of the production went to the land owners, and the tenant farmer received one-third. In 1933, Joe Hick's father leased the Mt. Airy farm, not as a tenant farmer, but on a percentage basis. Joe Hicks was raised on the farm and has continued to farm Lansdowne since his father's death in 1951.

Mr. Hicks is recognized as an innovator among local farmers. He has been active in numerous farm organizations. He has served for fifteen years on the Virginia Soybean Board. For twenty years, he has served as a director of the Virginia Soybean Association. He has eight years of service on the Virginia Beef Industry Board, the State Extension Advisory Committee and the Virginia Beef Cattle Association. He is a director of Colonial Farm Credit, and has served on the Northern Neck Soil Conservation Board, Richmond County ASCS, and Fredericksburg Feed Calf Association. He and his farm have been recognized for achievements in the area of conservation.

Down on the Farm

with Joe Hicks

by Lauren Block, Mary Haywood, Lesley Lowery, Sara Packett, Nathan Richards, Michelle Schools, and Michelle Self

"When my father rented the land here in 1933, he did so on a percentage basis. The tenant farmers had nothing of inventory at all. They had their hands and their family to help them work. Land owners tried to use tenant farmers who had many children because they would have lots of hands to pick the tomatoes, cut the corn, or do whatever had to be done. They didn't have the tractors and all the equipment like we do now. My father wanted to have his own business so he could build an inventory, do custom work, and manage his own operation.

"Before coming here, my father had a farm in Caroline County. He operated a sawmill and gristmill. He raised hay and feed for the livestock. He also sold calves, cucumbers, and tobacco for his cash crop. During the Depression of the early 30's, my father was almost devastated financially because he sold to a lot of people who could not pay. My daddy was a man who couldn't very well say no. If a man came in and needed flour, he would take anything they could pay. I've got right here in the barn anvils, a vise, block and tackle, horse harness and other things that people brought to the mill and traded for something to eat. And there wasn't any way in the world of getting any money out of it. The lumber business went to pot. He could see no future in his operation in Caroline County, so he sold what he had and came to Mt. Airy.

Tobacco worm

"The main part of his income on the farm in Caroline came from cucumbers and tobacco. The money in cucumbers was when they were picked small. He raised the cucumbers for a pickle factory. We had to go out there everyday and pick them. You had to move every vine to find those little ones.

"When you raised a crop of tobacco in a certain field year after year, you would get a soil and seed build-up of insects and diseases. We didn't have chemicals to control the insects and diseases like we do today. Every year, we took new land and cleared it for the tobacco. If we had young pines, in the fall we would cut the trees off of about two acres of land, and clear it for the tobacco patch the next year. There was always some land that hadn't had tobacco on it for a couple of years. By rotating like this, it helped cut down on the insect problems. We had to catch the worms on the tobacco. They'd give us a little tin can with kerosene oil in it, and we put the worms in there. When the tobacco stalk got a certain height, we had to break the top out of it and then prune off the bottom leaves because the sand would beat up on the bottom leaves when it rained. After we broke the top out, every week a sucker would come out on top of the leaf, and we had to go out and break them off. You wanted them off because the strength of the land was going into that sucker and taking away from the tobacco leaf.

"I remember in this new ground we had cleared for tobacco, there would be stumps, and we'd have to leave them to rot a while. Then we would take a single horse plow with one mule hooked to it, and we would make a little row in there as best we could. Then we planted black-eyed peas and covered them with our foot. In the fall, we would go in there and pick them by hand. They paid us to pick them, three cents for a lard can full of peas. One thing we looked for, if we picked three cans, we usually got a dime. On Saturday night, we could go to the A & P store and buy three candy bars that you couldn't eat in two or three days. Mr. Goodbars and Babe Ruths--great big bars of candy for a dime!

> My father often told me, "If you feed the land, the land will feed you, but if you starve the land, the land will starve you."

"I was so glad when my daddy said we wouldn't be raising cucumbers and tobacco when we moved to Mt. Airy, I didn't know what to do. We ran into tomatoes, but they were red. You could see them!

"My father was a good farmer who believed in good farming practices. I'd say, 'Why put fertilizer out there? All that good money, and you keep buying this stuff and putting it in the ground and then covering it up.' His response was, 'If you feed the land, the land will feed you. But if you starve the land, the land will starve you.' He has told me that many times.

"When my daddy died in 1951, we were farming the land here at Mt. Airy that had once been farmed by six different farmers. As each one moved off for one reason or the other, we incorporated that land into the operation that we had. I continued on until 1984. At that time I was farming 750 acres in Richmond County, and my son-in-law was farming 650 acres in Essex. We put it all together and incorporated it as Midway Farms, Inc. Now we have half of the operation on one side of the river and half of it on the other.

"We don't have a cattle operation as such, but we work the cattle in with the other crops we have. It's an integrated system. We handle the cattle just like we do the beans and corn. We will be through with our fall crops when the cows start calving. They calve in the winter, and when the spring comes, we just turn them out in the pasture. We move from one pasture to another until we take them to the market. It diversifies our operation.

"We breed the cows so that there are only three months out of the year that they'll be calving, and those are the three months when we have the least work to do so it fills in a gap there. During the time that they are being born, we have more time to spend with them if they have difficulty calving. We don't buy any cows. We keep our own heifers to reproduce. We pick the best ones for brood cows and go to reproduction sales to buy bulls. The bulls are separated from cows by a wire fence. We don't keep over two bulls in each lot because if you get three in a lot, sometimes two will turn on one and kill him. We cull out our old brood cows to sell, but we keep them as long as their feet and teeth are good. When they begin to lose their teeth and can't graze, we get rid of them. We watch them very closely. At least once a year, we get them up and check their teeth. A cow doesn't have any teeth at the top. All of them are at the bottom, and they grab the hay and grass, catch it in their teeth, and turn their head up to cut the grass off. To tell the age of a cow, you always look at the distance between the teeth because as they continue to pull up to break off the grass, it widens the gap. The gap will get so wide that the grass slips through and they can't get enough to eat. They can graze themselves to death, but can't get enough to eat. As long as the cows are not crippled and can eat, we feel like they are good and profitable.

"We grow and grind our own grain to feed the cattle. We fill the feeders about twice a week, sometimes three times, as they grow and take more. In October, we'll take cattle to Fredricksburg to a state-graded sale. Graders come in and grade them by weight, sex, and breed. Then buyers come in and bid them at auction sales. From there, they'll take them on to the corn belt in the Midwest and grow them out to the 1000 to 1200 pound range. They are butchered out there, and the meat is shipped back. They used to ship the calves out there and feed them where corn was cheaper. Then they shipped them back here and butchered them. They realized they can ship

Feeders are filled two or three times a week with grain raised on the farm. A couple of cows seem to be more interested in our photographer than their dinner.

boxed meat cheaper than live meat, so there are very few slaughter houses now on the East Coast. Most of them are in the Midwest.

"When my daddy and I first started with calves, if we could get calves weighing 500 pounds by market time in the fall, we felt like we were doing real well. Year before last, we had 70 calves that averaged 765 pounds a piece. The selection of the females that we keep for our production and the type of bulls that we've been buying increase our productivity. We try to do a better job of getting the weight as high as we can because we get paid by the pound.

"I have seen the biggest changes in farming over the years in the equipment and preparation of the land. When I started working on the farm, we did all the plowing with mules. We had a little single plow that would turn ten inches of soil. If you could plow three or four acres a day, that was the extent of it. Today, we take a 160 horse power tractor with an eight to sixteen inch plow and can plow 65 to 70 acres a day. I can remember when we used to shuck corn by hand. Three of us would take two rows each, shuck it down, throw it in piles, and then we'd have to come back and get the wagon, pick up the corn and put it in the barn. That winter we would shell it to sell. Now, in ten minutes time, my grandson can hop on the combine, go up to the other end of the field and come back with 150 bushels of corn. The three headed team of mules and a binder was about $500 and the rest was pure labor. This combine running up and down here is worth $140,000. There's got to be a lot of success somewhere to be able to make it in this business today. Back in 1946 when we were raising 65-70 bushels an acre, I sold the corn crop for $2.66 per bushel. Right now, we are making about 140 bushels per acre and are selling it for $2.06.

"We've tried some new things here, and I've always felt like I was a jump ahead by doing this type of experimental plot work. Some people came in once and told me about planting corn without cultivating it. I couldn't believe that could be done; I didn't think it was possible. There was a road that split a 30 acre field with 23 acres on one side and seven on the other. They said, 'Give us the 23 acres, you take the seven. If you make any more corn per acre on your seven acres than we do on the 23, then we'll pay you the difference in cash.' I had no way to lose so I put it in.

"For a long time I had been looking for a different method of putting crops in without having to plow. It always bothered me when we had those small tractors and had to start plowing for the spring crops in the fall. That land was laid open to the sun and elements with no cover whatsoever. If it rained or the wind blew, you had erosion. There have been times when the spring winds blew dust so I couldn't see the woods across the field. I have seen it when the highway department had to go down to Island Farm and take the blade on the tractor to push the sand out of the road that had blown off the field there.

Third Generation Farmer at Lansdowne

"My grandsons grew up on the farm. My son-in-law would bring those children over here when they were so small. I'd think, 'Why in the world did he bring that baby over here?' But I haven't, to this day, seen one of them get tired and want to go home. All they ever wanted was a lunch box and a jug of water, and they'd stay all day long.

"We've had them helping on the farm since they were twelve. I had heart trouble in '86 and couldn't run the combine. My grandson, Wes, was thirteen. I told my son-in-law, 'I can't run it, but I can ride. Wes and I together are going to give you a day's work on that combine.' I stood up in the combine and reached around to the controls but Wes drove. When Wes could drive it down the row and pull up beside the truck to unload, I let him take it by himself. When he came back up the field, he was grinning like a Cheshire cat. Then I started working him into other things. I trusted him and he has just taken it and gone on with it."

Wes Mundie, one of Mr. Hicks' grandsons, oversees the loading of feed.

"We use crop rotation here now where I plow all the corn stalks in the ground and come back on that with wheat, barley, or rye. When we thresh the rye next spring or early summer, we'll go in there and spread that straw back on the land with the combine and plant the soybeans in the straw. Then we spread the residue from the beans back on the ground. The next spring, we don't plow when we plant the corn. So we plow one time and get three crops off of it. The residue from the crop serves as a mulch that retains moisture in the ground. When we use this method of rotation, we have to depend on chemicals to control the weeds and grass.

Japanese businessmen come to inspect the quality and growing conditions of the Camp soybeans. Pictured with them are Dr. Sagaral, Experiment Station Superintendent; Dr. Buss, soybean breeder for Virginia Tech; Bryan and David Taliaferro of Montague Farms, Chen Pengyin, research assistant; and Mr. Hicks.

"About five years ago, I started raising edible soybeans to sell to the Japanese. This year I have 70 acres, and 35 of those acres are foundation seed. That's the seed we grow to use for planting next year. Any beans that we can raise for this market have to meet certain specifications. The bean has to go through a 14/64 screen, which is smaller than the eraser on a pencil. The Japanese put the bean through a process of fermentation and make tofu. It comes out very much like a tomato paste and is used over rice. It enhances the protein in the diet.

"The Japanese are very particular about the bean crop. They come to see how it is grown. They don't want any weeds in it, especially the pokeberry weed. The weed will discolor the end product and takes away from the eye appeal. So they won't take the beans if they have any pokeberries in them at all. When the Japanese come to visit, they have a dinner for us, and we sample some of their soybean dishes. For me, that's probably the hardest part of the whole deal.

"Year before last, we leased some land to Lake Cowart for tomatoes. It was amazing the kind of yield we got. When Mr. Cowart was here with his machine, in 7 1/2 hours, he picked over 18,000 baskets with the harvest machines which averaged 32 tons per acre. It is hard for me to perceive that kind of figure. I've worked in tomatoes with two men and a truck, and if we could haul 1000 baskets to market a day, we were doing some kind of good. Mr. Cowart and his people started in the fields at 6:00 in the morning. When I went over about 2:30 that afternoon, everything had stopped. He said, 'My factory can handle 20,000 baskets a day in top production. I've already sent 18,300 baskets out of here today.' From that point on, he had more than he could handle so he had trailers coming in from North Carolina. He'd load three trailers one day, two the next, and still have all he could handle in his factory.

"Mr. Cowart plants a specially produced tomato that is real tough so the mechanical part of the equipment doesn't tear them up. He plants them in a four foot wide row about 10 inches apart. He will not rent land for tomatoes unless he has water for irrigation because it's such a high dollar crop and could be a big risk. When the plant begins to turn kind of pale and the tomato is almost white, the field is sprayed with an ether compound. That stops the growth of the plant and the energy goes to the tomatoes so they all ripen at one time. When they go in with the machinery to harvest, the plants are pulled up or cut off. When the plant goes through the machine, the tomatoes are separated from the vines. They even have monitors that sort them by color; it keeps the red ones and drops the green ones out. As the tomatoes move down the rollers to grading tables, there are approximately 12 people riding on the machine to pick out any bad tomatoes that might have made it to that point. When the tomatoes are taken to the factory, the workers go through them again to cull out the bad ones. It's really a fascinating operation, and I enjoyed working with them.

"I would say that World War II probably did more to educate the farmer than anything because during the war, the government said we needed to produce from fence row to fence row to feed a nation at war. So that's what we did. We got good prices for what we had, so we bought more land, more fertilizer, better seed, and we found out it was profitable. Then when the war was over, we had more production than we could handle, and the government came in with regulations to cut down on production. That devastated the farmers because, in some cases, they had gone in debt. They had obligated themselves at a time when things were real good, and when things turned around, they could not survive. After the war, the government really came in with controls. Many of the regulations are still with us today, only we have more of them.

"There are a lot of environmental controls. There are soil conservation plans which recommend things such as crop rotation practices, strip cropping, and the use of filter strips to cut down on chemical runoff. There are regulations such as the Clean Water Bill to control water pollution. A nutrient management plan is well on the way, but it has not been mandated yet. Sooner or later, we will be required to keep a record on every acre detailing what chemicals we use and how much we put on the land. Some of the things we are doing now have not been mandated, but we try to catch these initiatives when they are offered while some assistance is provided. Then when they're mandated, we are on top of it already.

"Some people are in favor of sludge and some are not. The sooner we develop some method to use it profitably, the better off we are going to be. Sludge is a good product. It gives the soil more water holding capacity and adds nitrogen, some phosphate, and a little potash. It can cut down a lot on our fertilizer cost. However, you don't just put it out there and forget it. You have to monitor it. It's a very scientific method. I feel it is more profitable and will help clean up the environment.

"I'm not really superstitious. Many farmers won't start a job on Friday. I've always been a nut enough to start a job on Friday so I can get everything in shape and get the kinks out, and by Monday I can roll. I am a little superstitious about starting a job on Monday. If I start a job on Monday and get fouled up, I'm fouled up all week.

"Farmers have to take the weather as it comes. When the weather says go, we go. I'm reminded of Mr. Seager Franklin down on Sabine Hall road. Some hunters from the city once asked, 'What do y'all do here in the winter when it snows? You're so far from everything.' He replied, 'Man, we just let it snow.' We can't control the weather so we just try not to worry about it."

Experiments Produce Results for Farmers

By Mary Haywood, Lesley Lowery, Nathan Richards, and Amanda Sanders

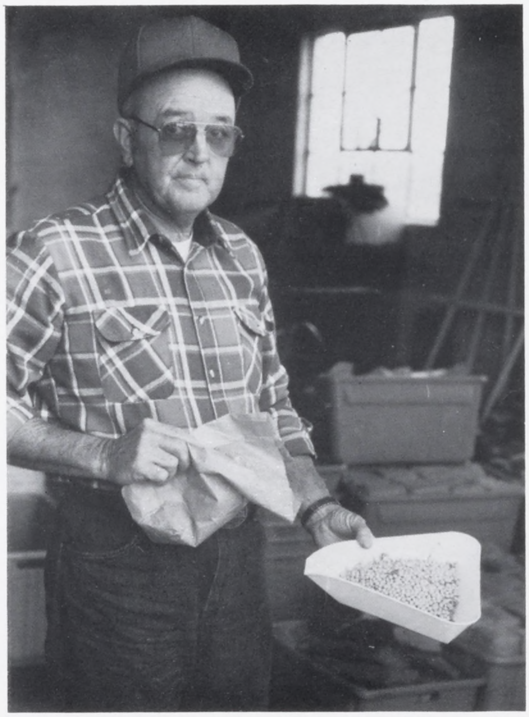
Superintendent, Ras Sagaral, explains the workings of the experiment station to ***Close Ties*** *staff members.*

Our staff visited the Virginia Tech Agricultural Experiment Station located near Warsaw. Not too many people know where the experiment station is; some farmers don't even know. It was first established in 1912 in Williamsburg and was later moved to Warsaw in 1950. The station is located on a 54 acre parcel of land which is owned by the state. All other land used by the station is rented or leased by the university.

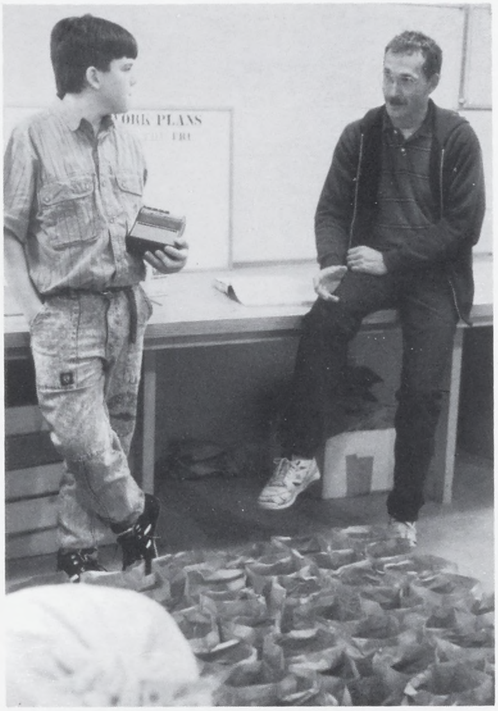
This experiment station is responsible for the breeding and development of soybeans, wheat, barley, and oats. It is the only one of the 13 Virginia Tech branch experiment stations with this purpose. The Camp variety of soybean was developed here. The small bean is used primarily for export to Japan. It is used in Japan for the manufacture of a specialty product natto, which is fermented and used over rice and is a very nutritious food. The Hutcheson soybean, a larger version of the Camp bean, was also developed here.

In order to breed a new variety, variety A with certain characteristics is crossed with variety B with other desired characteristics. Variety A might be very susceptible to disease, while variety B may be highly tolerant to disease. At the station, the breeder crosses variety A with variety B through pollination. Pollen of one plant is introduced into the stamen of the other. A magnifier and a steady hand are necessary. Offspring will have characteristics of both parent plants.

The seeds from the offspring are planted repeatedly over a number of years. Through selecting the best, the breeder will obtain one particular type of plant that will come true to type, having all the desired characteristics. There will be approximately 10 years from the time the original cross is made to the time the variety is ready for release to the farmer. It takes a long time to produce a new variety. Qualities such as disease resistance, nonshattering, high yield, large seed, and high sugar content are considered. The goal is to develop a seed that will produce a crop that farmers can market successfully.

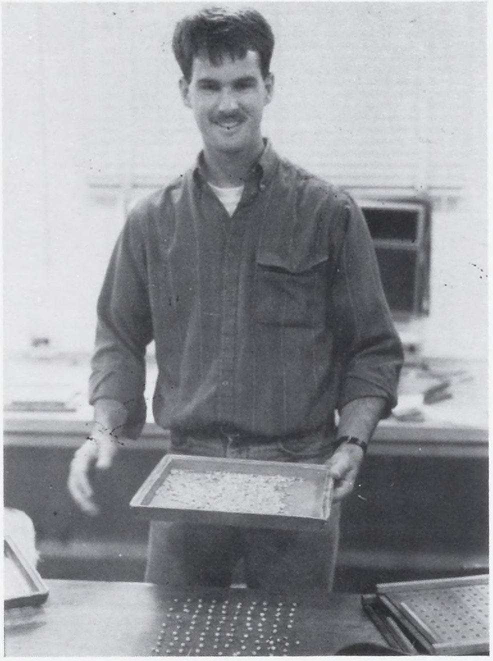


James Davis shows us soybeans ready to be cleaned. The station has a small cleaner that removes pieces of pod, stem, and other debris.

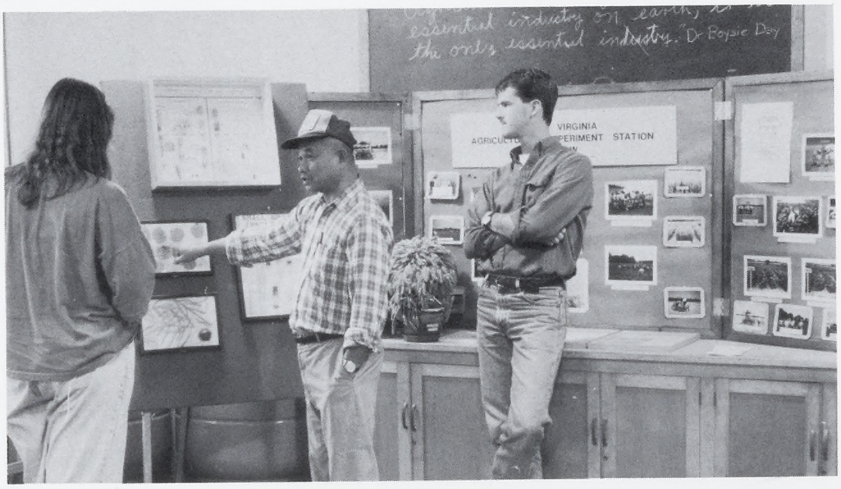


Lin Barrack explains to Nathan that each bag contains a sample from different tests. Plot weights must be run on each sample in order to determine yield per acre.

William Sisson is using a moisture tester to determine the amount of moisture in each sample of seed. This particular sample ran 15.7% moisture, which when calculated together with its weight, yielded 55.4 pounds per bushel. This was a little low since normally a bushel of soybeans will weigh around 60 pounds.



Kirk Vanlandingham demonstrated a seed counter that can be used to count seeds for test plots. Test plots are usually four 18 foot rows using 640 seeds per plot.

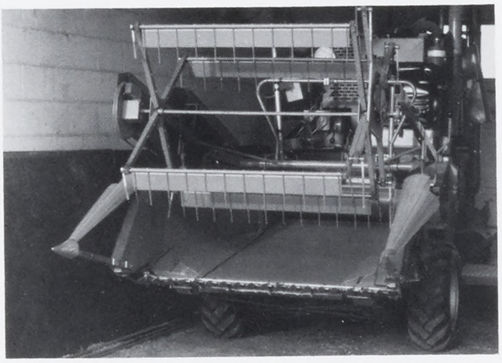

essential industry on earth, is the only essential industry." Dr Boysie Day
VIRGINIA AGRICULTU PERIMENT STATION

Dr. Sagaral shows us the different varieties of grain that have been developed over the years at the Warsaw station. They include: Madison Wheat, Nomini Barley, Essex, Hutcheson, Camp, and Chesapeake Soybeans, to name a few.

The station is trying for the first time to test the performance of cotton under our local conditions. They are testing 24 different varieties to see which will best adapt and give the best yield.

Dr. Sagaral, station superintendent, received his bachelor of science degree in agricultural engineering and masters in agronomy from the University of the Philippines and his doctoral degree from Virginia Tech. After graduation, he went back to the Philippines and taught at the university. Then he worked as senior scientist at Dole Philippines and Dole Thailand. Because of unrest in the Philippines, Dr. Sagaral resigned from his position in 1985 and came to the U.S. He worked at Virginia Tech for two years and filled the vacancy at the Warsaw station caused by the retirement of Mr. Houston Camper.

Another new crop introduced here is kenaf, a relative of okra and cotton. The wood portion of the stem can be used for paper manufacturing. This crop could be used instead of our forests, which take longer to replace. The fiber of the stem can be used for twine and the leaves can be used as a food source for animals.



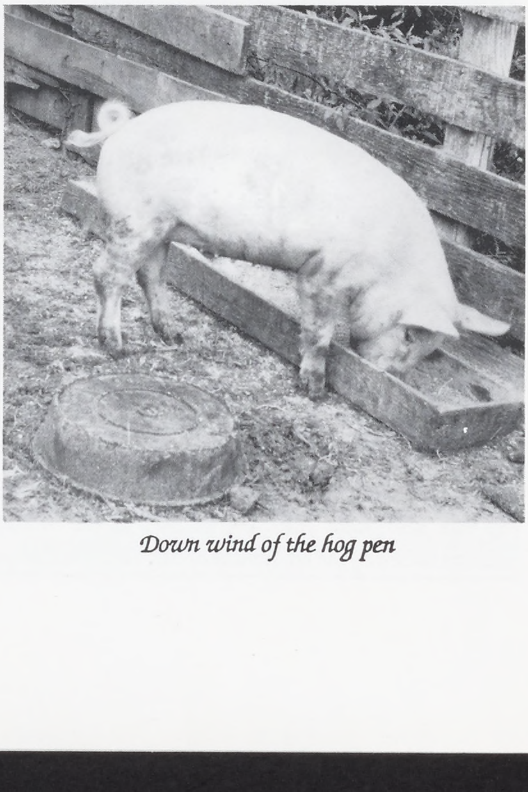
Small combine used to harvest test plots

The Best of the Barnyard

Dinner time? I don't think so.

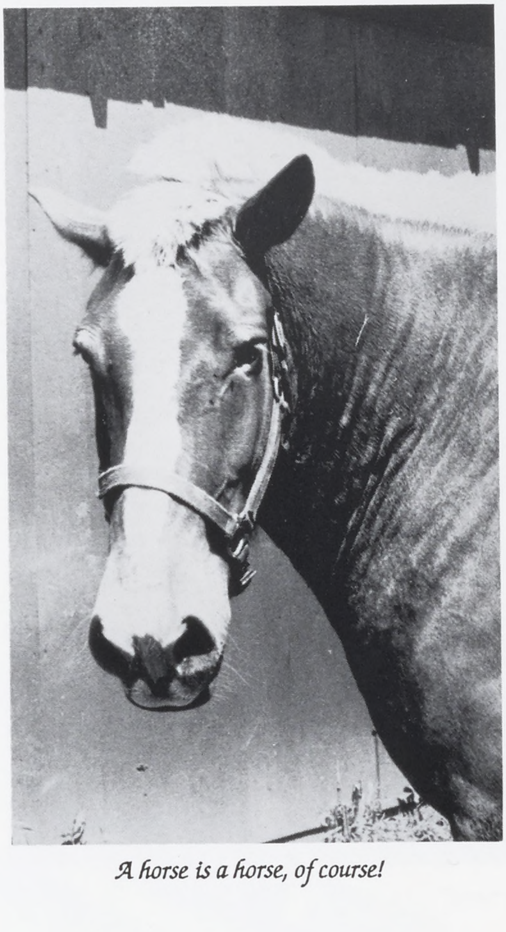
Miss Cristi Belle

Cinderella

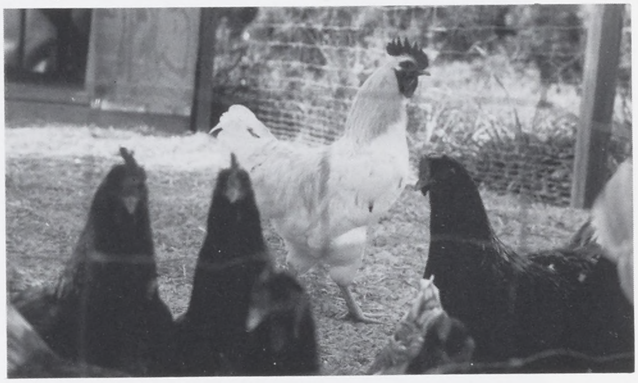


Down wind of the hog pen

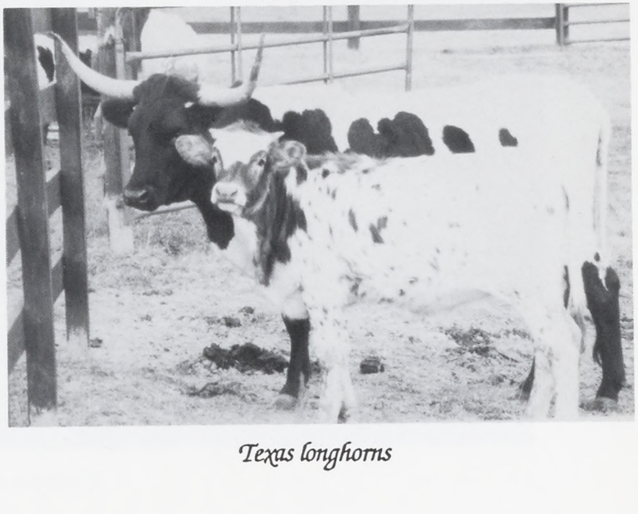
Can we talk?



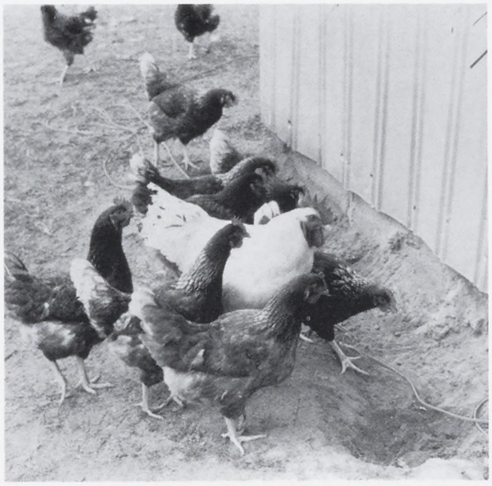
A horse is a horse, of course!



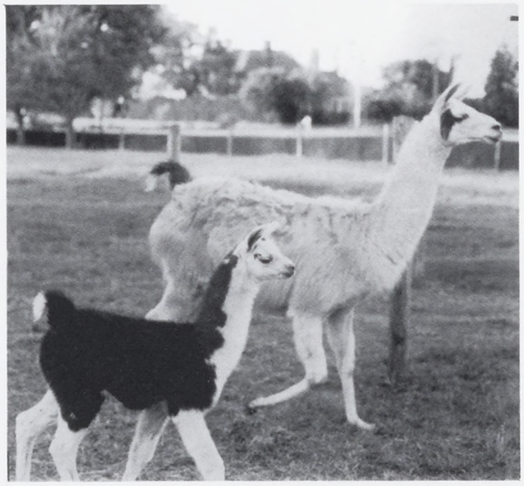
King of the roost



Texas longhorns



That's my bug. I saw it first.

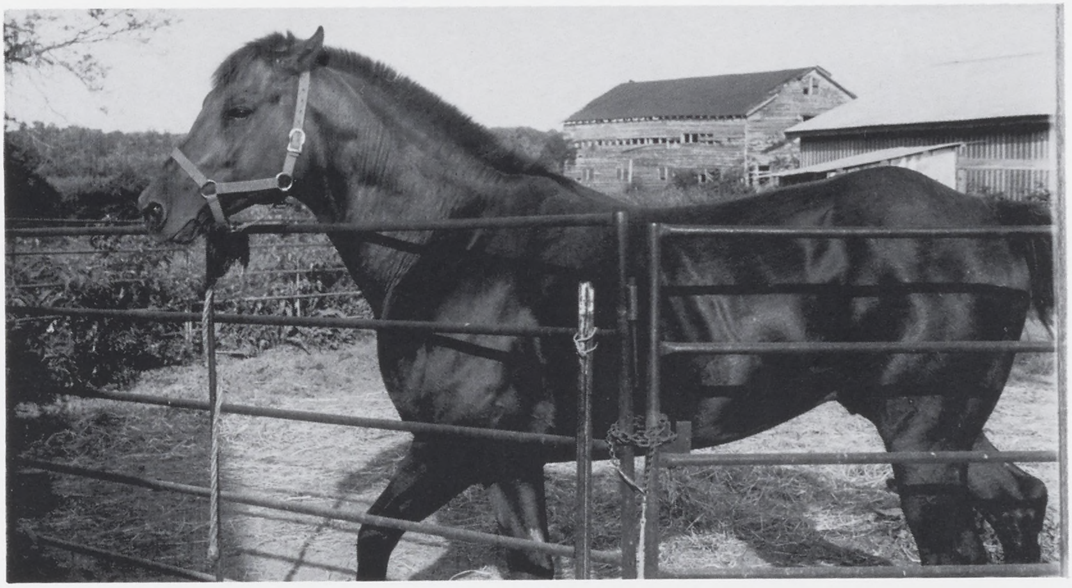


Llamas on parade

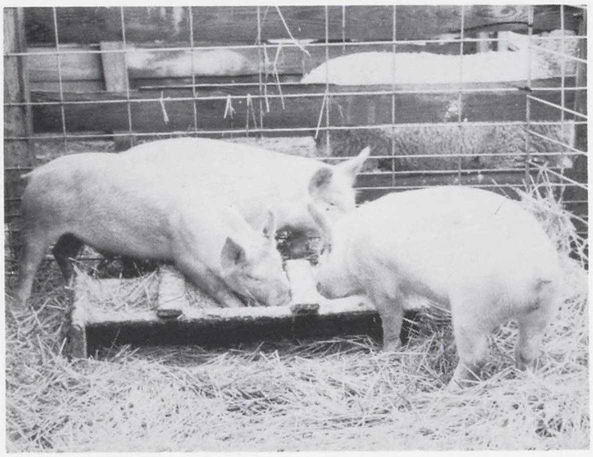
Oh give me a home...

Have you any wool?

Kissing Cousins



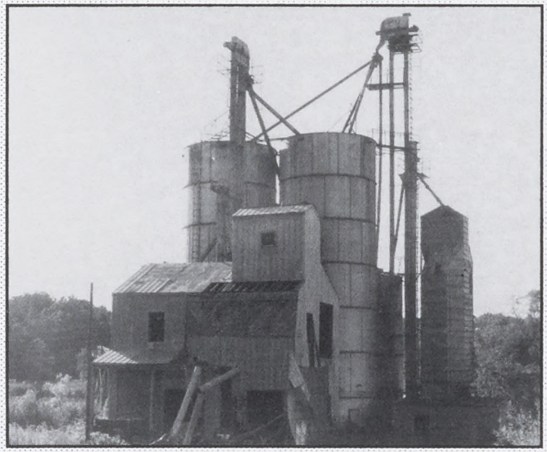
King strikes a pose.

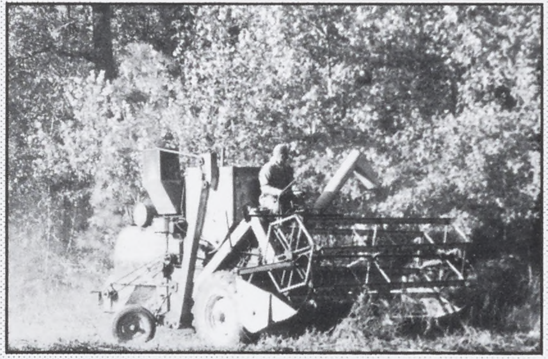


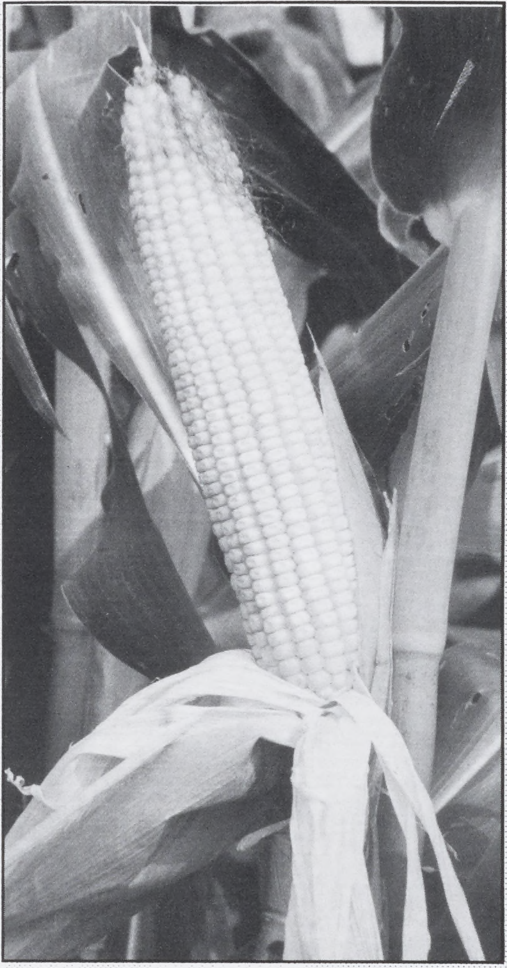
It's not polite to put your feet in the trough!

Not camera shy

Farmscapes

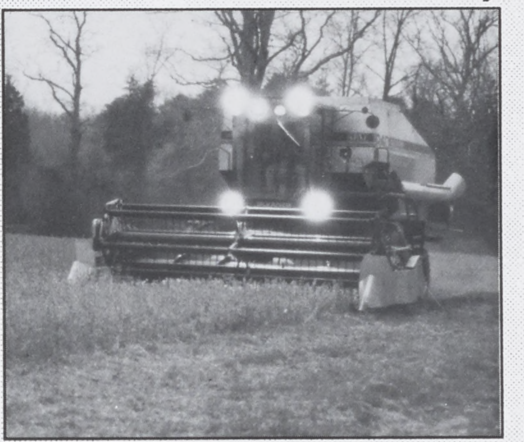

Abandoned grain elevator on Totuskey Creek


Threshing beans at Tidewater

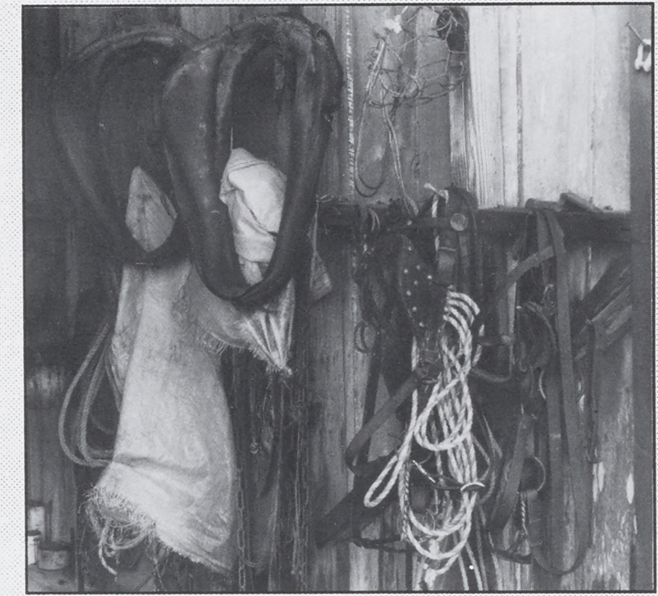

Corn from Bernard Packett's test plot

Hammack's tomato factory at Emmerton

David Pierson, Richmond County Young Farmers 1992 corn contest winner



A farmer's work is never done.



Tack, a horse's equipment

Unloading corn at O. R. Withers & Son Grain

And On This Farm...

A Visit with Myrtle Davis

By Mary Haywood, Lesley Lowery, Kathy Morse, Michelle Schools, and Crystal Simpson

Mrs. Davis was ready with a display of some of the products from their farm for us to see. We were graciously given a tour of the barnyard area and treated to ice cream afterwards.

"I've been on a farm all my life. My daddy handled poultry and eggs. He had a business and we hauled our produce to Washington. The first year Wilson and I were married, we lived halfway between his people and mine. We could look out of our window and see both home places. My daddy was working the big poultry farm and Wilson started helping him. We went over there and stayed for four years. Then one day we had the opportunity to buy the Davis home place...$3,000 for a farm. We thought we would never see that much money. Daddy gave us the egg money for a few weeks and kind of helped us, and we bought it. Three thousand dollars we paid for the farm, and we pay that much in taxes now. The farm has been in the Davis family for four generations. We have raised three children on the farm, and have enjoyed it. Wilson is semi-retired now.

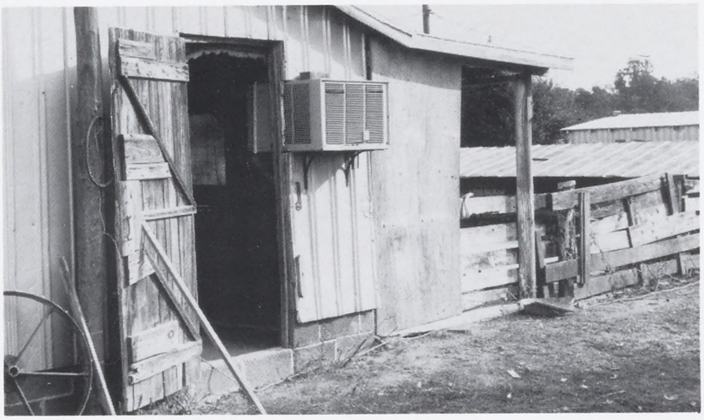
"We feel that the land is only loaned to us by God, and we should take care of it and leave it in better shape for the next ones coming on. We have a field of alfalfa that we call 'The Lord's Acre.' My husband, Wilson, raises that as a little church project. The money we get from the hay in that field goes to the church.

The entrance to the Davis' farm advertises brown eggs for sale.

...there were some pigs

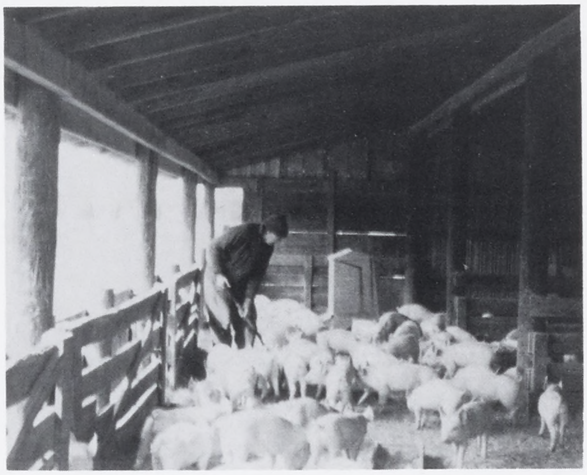
"Back in the days when we were in full production, it was like Old MacDonald's farm. We used to have 500 hogs, 500 hens, 500 turkeys, and 500 capons. There wasn't a time when you didn't hear a rooster crowing or a turkey gobbling or pigs squealing. The pigs were born in the stalls in the farrowing house. Farrowing means having a pig. We kept dates on all the pigs and brought them in the farrowing house a week ahead to get them used to the environment. I kept close watch on them; we couldn't just leave them during that time. I had some nights when I stayed up all night with them. Each mama had her own stall, and we had heat lamps and air conditioning. We had an air conditioner in there before we had one in our own house. Every day I let the pigs out one at a time to exercise them while I cleaned and disinfected all of those stalls. I washed the mama's eating pans out and put clean shavings in for them. After the babies were born, I sometimes had to cut their teeth. If they had needle teeth, they would cut the mama while nursing. When I did that, I always took the little ones in a basket and went far off while the mother was eating so it wouldn't upset her. The quieter you keep the mother pigs the better, so I tried not to upset them.

"When the little pigs were about two weeks old we'd put them in another set of pens with their mama. Then we'd have more pigs ready to come in and have their babies. There was a lot to be done like castrating, worming, and giving shots. Then we loaded them on the truck and carried them to a pasture where we grew them out to market size, about 225 pounds.



"The pigs had an air conditioner before we had one in our own house."

Below, feeder pigs surround Mr. Davis as he cleans out the hog barn. When the pigs were old enough they were put in a "growing out" house some distance from the barnyard. The hogs were allowed to glean in fields that had been harvested.



...there were some turkeys

"Raising turkeys was a lot of work too. We got 500 turkeys every year in May. We dressed all those turkeys for Thanksgiving and Christmas. It was a job! We got them when they were babies, right out of the shell. It would take about six months to get them ready. They were big and noisy but very timid. We always had to have lights on them when they were little and had to feed them good turkey mash. At first we raised bronze turkeys, but by the time we stopped raising them we had all white turkeys. They were easier to pick. The men killed the turkeys with an axe. They put them in a funnel with only the head sticking out. After they were beheaded, we drained them and scalded them. We had an electric picker that picked off the feathers. I always saw to opening them and I had one helper. We packed them in barrels of ice to chill. Then they were weighed and we dressed them by wrapping them with giblets inside, ready for the pan. We had our market right here at home. We booked so many a day. It was a big rush at Thanksgiving and an even bigger rush for Christmas. Some nights they would have to take hold of my hands and pull me upstairs. I would be so tired I couldn't even walk. How would you girls like to do that? I've ruined you for it, haven't I?

..there were some capons

"We also raised capons. I don't think people even do that any more now since we have these big baking hens. But back in that day, we would neuter roosters when they were about a pound and a half before they started getting much comb. We fasted them for 24 to 36 hours and went under the wing on the top of the back and took out the testicle with a special instrument. Once they were neutered, the meat would be more tender, they didn't put out a comb, and if it was done right, they wouldn't crow. They were just very quiet and ate and grew. We sold frying chickens too, but we didn't have to dress them. We sold them live. So our days were pretty busy with turkeys, capons, pigs, and eggs to gather from the chickens.

...there were some cows

"At one point, we milked from three to five cattle and separated cream. We made some butter to fill special orders. Most of our food was raised in the garden. We had a rock cellar under the house to store our Irish potatoes.

"Back then, we raised mostly wheat and corn. We needed that for the livestock. We took the corn and wheat to Garland's Mill and Gardy's Mill to have it ground into corn meal and flour. We used the corn meal for cornbread. From the pigs, we had big lard cans full of lard for shortening. The bread was so good! We had cows for fresh milk. I have one milk bowl that Gramma Parr had. We skimmed the cream off and let the rest of the milk sit and make clabber. Then we sifted flour in it and added other ingredients. We didn't use a recipe. We just reached in and grabbed a little bit, but they were the best biscuits you ever tasted. If we didn't have clabber, we had to use plain milk for the biscuits, but the bread wouldn't be as good. To make clabber, we let the milk sit out for about 24 hours in the summer. In the wintertime, we'd have to take it to a warm kitchen. The bacteria turned the milk to clabber. When it first soured it was sweet, but when it got stronger, we would put meal in it and give it to the pigs.

...there were some chickens

"Back then, the only kinds of eggs we had were brown eggs. We had speckled hens we called Dominiquers and Plymouth Rocks, and they all laid brown eggs. It wasn't until I was grown that we had Leghorn hens for white eggs. Then everybody went to white eggs. Now it's just more of a novelty to have brown eggs. I think they are almost all the same when you keep the hens in houses and give them food. If they stay out all the time and eat grass, they have more color to the yolks. There is not that much difference in them, just so they're fresh! We have to feed them well to keep up their body weight. We give them oyster shells so their shells will be stronger.

"I have 200 chickens and about 180 customers that come here. People just drop by to buy them. Nearly everyone wants those extra-large eggs. I get about ten dozen a day. When I gather the eggs I bring them in and go through them. If there are any spots on them, I clean them right then. I grade them. Some are jumbo eggs which are laid by the old hens. The medium eggs are from hens that are just starting to lay. I prefer ones from the newest hens. They set up so pretty in the pan if you're going to fry them. When I get up in the morning, I start working the eggs up for the next day. All eggs that I don't sell here are packed to be taken to the market. I keep them in refrigeration until I am ready to take them to the market. The night before I carry them to market, I take them out of refrigeration so they won't have a sweat on them. I leave by 6:00 in the morning to try to get ahead of the unloading. They are auctioned off at the Flea Market in Tappahannock on Tuesday mornings.

"When the hens go in to lay, they kick straw up and make a nest. They stay on the nest for about a half hour. They will lay an hour or two later each day. Then they will lay in late afternoon, skip the next day, and start all over again. At night we close them up so the foxes won't get them. I don't let them out until after 2:00 in the afternoon because I want them all to lay in here. Otherwise, they would go down to the stalls and lay. They get a good feeding at night so they will go back in. Hens lay so long before they'll take the nest, or get broody as my aunt used to say. If the chicks are healthy, they will lay by five months. The breeds they have today are stronger and grow faster. I have two small incubators, but if you have any hens setting, they will hatch them better than anything. A hen has to turn the eggs every day when they are setting, but it's right much for them to lift. A setting hen gets her feet on them and turns them around. She pulls the egg and puts her beak right under the egg to turn it.

Nests are full of large brown eggs. Mrs. Davis will gather, wash, grade, and box them for sale.

...there was a mule

"We have a mule named Mr. Ed. He was a Father's Day present to my husband, and he really enjoys him. He's eight years old and is a little skittish. He's not quite as friendly as I'd like him to be. He's a pet. We wait on him and put him in the stall each night. He has a manger where he gets his horse feed and alfalfa, water, corn, and all his goodies. I'd like to have him pull a cart in a parade, but he's not trained yet. Maybe he can do it next year.

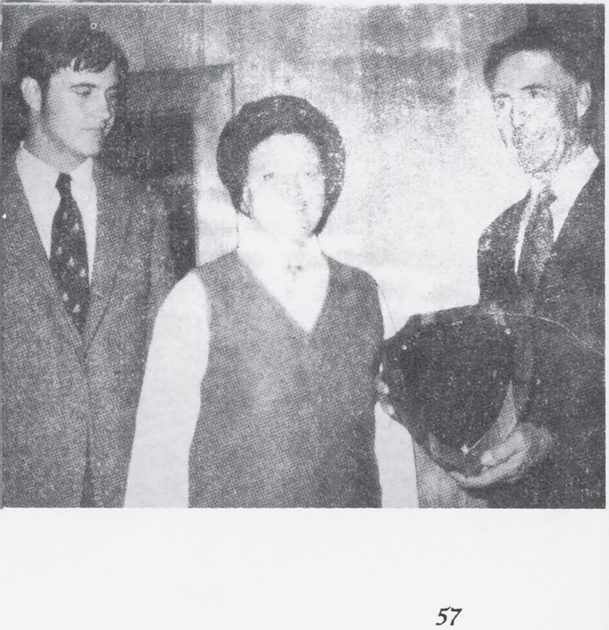
...there were some geese, E-I-E-I-O.

As an alternative crop, the Davises raised 80 acres of milo. It is planted like soybeans and harvested with the small grain header on the combine. The crop puts a lot of organic matter in the soil and is drought resistant.

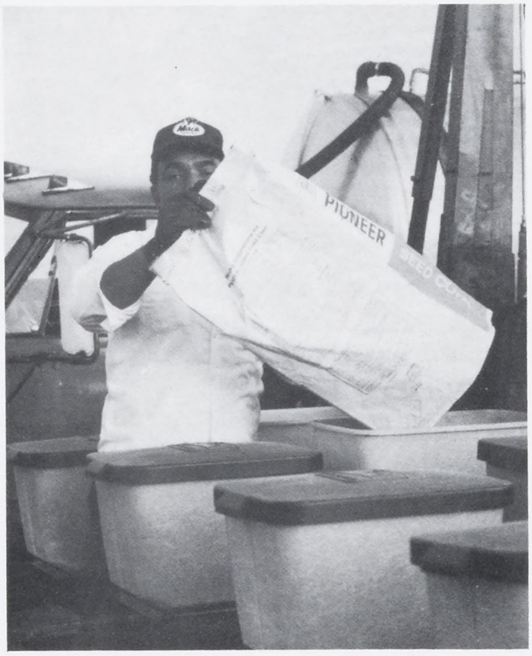
"We have taken a lot of our produce to the Richmond County Fair and Virginia State Fair. In the early 60's and 70's, the State Fair had just about gone down to nothing. They didn't even clean up the tables from one year to the next. Then they hired a new manager, and he put agriculture back into the fair. People started putting up stands, and we had a great time seeing who would win. But it has gotten to be too much. We had to drive to Richmond each day. It was a lot of work and took a lot of time to build the 10 by 10 space, set up the tables, and arrange everything. It was just so much fun!"

Prize winning corn at the Richmond County Fair

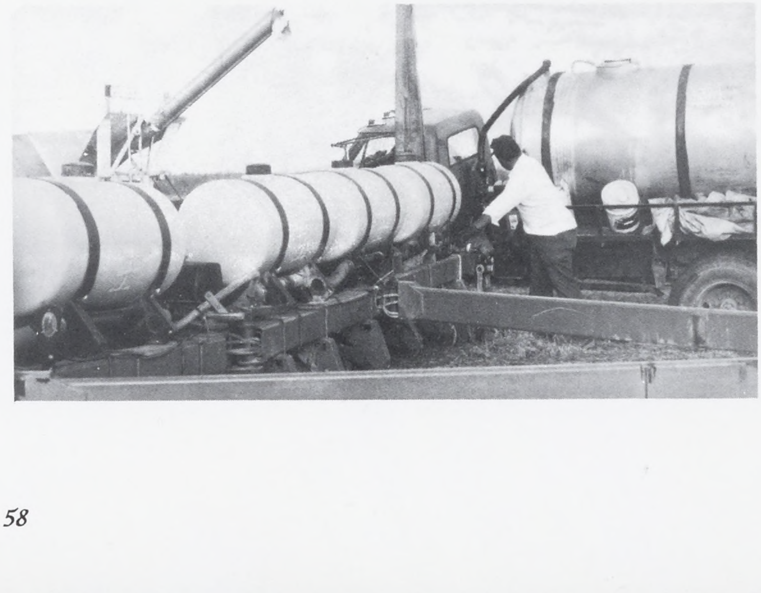
Mrs. Davis is congratulated by Gov. Dalton for her first place booth at the Virginia State Fair. Below the Davis family is named "Outstanding Farm Family" in Richmond County for 1971. This award, presented by Richmond County Farm Bureau, recognized the Davises not only for being good farmers, but for their church and community work as well.



Philip Haynie Utilizes Advances in Farm Technology

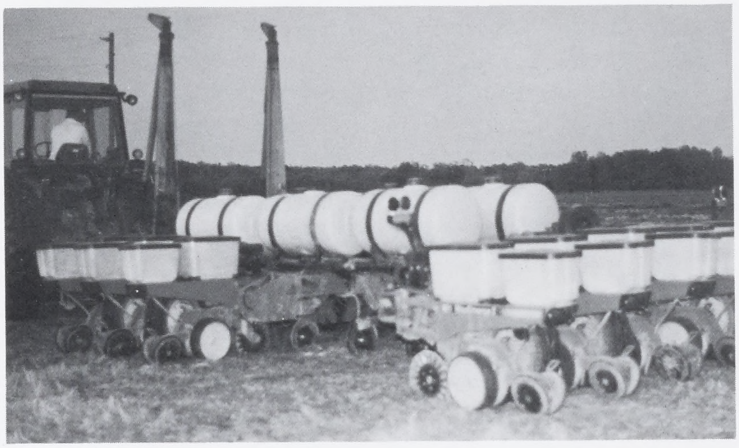


Philip Haynie, a VPI graduate with a degree in animal science, farms 4000 acres in the Northern Neck, with approximately 600 acres in Richmond County. The equipment which he uses allows him, along with two helpers, to farm the same amount of land it would have taken 100 men to farm thirty years ago.



A twelve row planter facilitates corn planting. The equipment allows Mr. Haynie to spray insecticide, fertilize, and plant the corn seeds simultaneously. At the head of the planter, the set of round drums contains insecticide. Above, Mr. Haynie refills the second row of compartments which holds the seed. Fertilizer is put in the last row of containers.

The tractor is equipped with a computer which tells how much corn has been planted per acre. It records the amount of seed coming out of each planter and will also alert the farmer to planter malfunction. This twelve row planter can plant about 15 acres per hour. What he can plant in six hours using today's advanced technology would have taken farmers of 30 years ago over a week to plant.



At the edge of dark, as Mr. Haynie finishes planting for the day, he gets the planter ready to move. It's amazing how this massive piece of equipment can be compacted to make travel on the highway easier. Otherwise, what would motorists think if they found themselves behind Mr. Haynie and his planter?

Farming Family Style

by Crystal Simpson

The staff was interested in talking to the Vernon Delano family about their three generations actively involved in farming. The Delanos come close to being the self-sufficient farm family of days gone by. They still practice a variety of farm activities which are not typical of today's farmer. Despite their long hours and hard work, we sensed that they truly enjoy their work, love working together, and wouldn't trade their lifestyle for anything.

The three generations include Mr. and Mrs. Vernon Delano, Harold and Brenda Delano, and Harold Dean Delano. We enjoyed visiting with them at their home place on the Rappahannock River. The interview was so lively and colorful, we wanted to share it as we heard it, full of warmth, love, and affection.

Mrs. Delano: Vernon and I both grew up on a farm. I remember being small, about 10 years old, and hated having to thin corn because now and then you'd get hold of one of those corn worms and they would sting you. I hated working in the field, but I did it. We were used to work, didn't think anything about it.

Mr. Delano: When I was about 10, I used to cultivate corn and plow with horses. That's how I started out, working with my father.

Brenda: Y'all raised everything you ate. Remember what you used to do when you killed beef in the winter time when it was really cold.

Mrs. Delano: We'd kill a beef and hang it out in the barn and it would freeze enough to keep it. Then we would just go out and cut a piece off when we wanted it. When it got warm, we salted it up and made corn beef. There wasn't any way of freezing anything like we do now. When Vernon's mother used to make butter, she would put it in a salt brine. Back years ago, I can't remember my mother having a root cellar, but the Packetts over there had a little house that was a few feet above the ground. They baked a whole lot of pies in the winter time and set them out there and nothing could get to them. Vernon came home many times as a young man and said he had sliced off a piece of frozen pie and it was really good.

Mr. Delano: It was good, it was!

Brenda: You got ice out of the river too, didn't you?

Mrs. Delano: My father had an ice house back down on the hill. He'd dig a hole and put straw in there. When the river would freeze real thick, he would take an ax and go out there and cut it up in chunks. He would put the ice in there and when he got as much as he wanted, he would cover it all with straw. That's what they used to ice up the fish when they sold them.

Staff: You were talking about making butter. Do you still make it?

Mrs. Delano: I haven't made any since last year. I learned to make butter from my mother. I use a churn which is a glass jar with paddles in it.

Brenda: She had an electric one, but it wouldn't do to suit her.

Mrs. Delano: The electric churns are all right I reckon, but the little thing that goes down in it to whirl the butter is tiny and cuts the butter up. It makes it hard to dip out, and I don't like that. Vernon milked the cows and brought the milk home. Then I'd put it in gallon jars. We put it in a refrigerator to keep it cold. The next day when the cream had separated from the milk, I skimmed it off, put it in the churn, and churned it. I put the press in cold water, then packed the butter real tight in a half pound butter mold. I have a little paddle that I use to pack it, and the press makes a print. Then I hold the mold over a plate, shove it down, and the butter comes out. You know, we used to go to the auction sales when they had these butter presses for sale and Vernon would buy them. Once, Lois O'Dell said, "Do you collect them?" I said, "No, I use them!"

Brenda: The butter is real yellow looking because it's rich with the cream. It's not run through all that stuff like what you buy at the store. Pop Pop, what was your first tractor like?

Mr. Delano: Farmall A. It ran off gas. I bought it when I was 24. I bought the plows, the cultivator, and the tractor all new for $600. And you can't do that any more. I had a Farmall Tractor International combine when I started out. I pulled it behind a tractor. It had about a five foot header and cut two rows of soybeans. Then I went to a self-propelled and after that wore out, I went to a self-propelled 203 without a cab. Then I bought a 715 with a cab and air conditioning. When I got rid of that one, I got this 1440 and I've had it about five years. It has a 16 foot header. With my first combine, I had to bag up the beans as I threshed them. We got just as much for beans then as we do now. But we didn't have all the expenses we've got now.

Mrs. Delano: When Harold was 15, he couldn't wait to get out in the field. In the winter time, he'd say, "Deed, I'll be so glad when the time comes to plow." When Harold first put a CB in his truck, his call name was "The Crazy Farmer."

Harold Delano plants soybeans with an eight row planter.

Brenda: He said that Mr. Camper used to laugh at him when he started cultivating corn...

Harold: Yeah, I used to cultivate with a Super C tractor, and I wasn't tall enough to shove in on the clutch. I had to slide off the seat to stop it, and he used to laugh about that. That was the first tractor I ever drove, the Super C.

Mrs. Delano: A little small tractor and a little small fellow.

Staff: Harold, how did you interest Harold Dean in farming? How did you start him off?

Brenda: He started himself.

Harold: He just wanted to go with his father so I took him with me. He just kept on coming. I started putting him on a tractor when he was 3 or 4 years old, and eventually he got the hang of it. When he was about 8 years old, he started baling hay. Now, it was a hydrostatic and he didn't have to shift gears, just shove a lever ahead. Mervin Delano saw him and said, "Harold Dean on a tractor? He can't stop that thing." I said, "No, he throws an anchor out the back." He drove and did a real good job and progressed right on up to driving the big tractors.

Brenda: When Harold used to come home for lunch, that was it! Harold Dean was going with his daddy. I packed him a lunch and he got on that tractor, rode with Harold all day, and never went to sleep. I'd have to go up there and check on him to make sure he was all right, but he wouldn't come home with me. He'd just stay right with his daddy the whole time. Harold Dean's other grandmother got him started with all these animals. She gave him two ducks when he was in nursery school. Boy, he thought something of those ducks.

Staff: Harold Dean, what animals do you have now?

Harold Dean: I've got chickens, ducks, goats, baby cows, one rabbit, that's about all. I sell my eggs. There is a lady down Farnham way who bakes pound cakes, and if I have 20 dozen eggs, she'll take every one of them every week.

Brenda: I thought it was funny when the ducks first started hatching out. When people would come to buy the ducks, he'd say, "What are you going to do with them?" They'd say, "We're going to eat them." He'd say, "Well, you're not buying these ducks." He wouldn't sell them to anybody who was going to eat them. We always laughed about that. One time he found a little, teeny-tiny rabbit when they were planting no-till beans and how he ever saw that thing in the straw, I'll never know. I came up there that afternoon and he had him over in the grass and said, "Mama, look what I found. Can I bring him home?" So I said, "Well, Harold Dean, I don't know if we can do anything with him." He had a broken leg. But we carried him home, nursed him, healed him up, and turned him loose. Pretty much, anything we find that's hurt, we'll try to see what we can do for it.

Staff: You all have your hands in a little bit of everything, don't you? Do you still keep bees?

Mrs. Delano: We have six hives now. Vernon can tell you more about the bees. One time I was up on the farm with him, and he drove down to where he has his bee hives in a line, and there was a whole swarm on the ground. He said, "Deed, here's a swarm of bees." So he went on to the old house sitting there. He had a hive all ready, and all he had to do was bring it out there. He put on his old hat with this net around it so the bees couldn't bother him. He took that hive and sat it right down on the ground where those bees were, and you know every one of them went in that hive. By dark, he had that hive full of bees. Then he took it and sat it where he wanted it. Now those bees are coming and a going.

Harold Dean rescues baby rabbits from the path of the combine and sets them free in another field.

Brenda: They've gotten stung too.

Harold: When we first started fooling with bees, we really didn't know what to do with them. We'd put our nets on but wouldn't have them tight around our hats. Bees would go down and get in under the nets and sting us on our nose and ears. One time Ralph Simmons came up there and was going to help Daddy take honey. He had black oil skins on, and bees don't like black! Somehow they got up underneath his pants legs and they got him, in this world. He was running around there! When we're taking honey, we can calm the bees down with smoke. We have a can that we drop cloth rags down into, and it smokes when you pump air into it. Bees are on the honey comb, and it will just smoke them right off of it. The smoke stuns them a little bit.

Mr. Delano: Bees aren't any trouble to take, if you know what to do with them. We have a lot of cedars and they go out on those limbs and swarm. I go out there, take a saw and cut the limb off, and take them any where I want them. I carry the limb to the box, give it a shake, and they fall in the box. Then I put the top on it. Sometimes I don't even have my equipment on. They don't bother you too much when they are swarming like that. I take honey around July.

Brenda: They used to crab and fish. They caught some big rock fish. One time they caught so many the newspaper came down and took a picture of them. They quit when it got so they couldn't catch those big rock fish.

Mrs. Delano: Sometimes they used to get $2.00 a pound for a big old rock fish. If the rock weighed 50 pounds, you had some money. Honest, the laws have changed and nobody can make any money any more in the river.

Brenda: They quit fishing and went to helping the Elliotts in the slaughter house for winter income.

Harold: My job was to kill the hogs and cattle and drain the blood out of them. Warren Elliott and Leon Douglas did all the scalding and gutting. The day after we killed the hogs, we would cut them up into pork chops or hams and make sausage, any way you wanted to do it. We kept the beef in the cooler for seven to ten days to age so it wouldn't be tough.

Staff: Brenda, did you help them?

Mrs. Delano: She stuck right in there. She's a regular farmer's wife.

Brenda: I started answering the phone for them and helping out when people came in. I'd help them when they cut the hogs up. As far as the killing, I didn't do any of that. I helped clean a beef out over there one day. It wasn't bad. It was fun with Warren over there. We used to laugh a lot and had a lot of fun over there working together. Harold Dean helped with cutting beef up too. He'd sweep and clean and Warren would give him fifty cents every time he swept the floor.

Staff: Harold Dean, what do you like best about farming?

Harold Dean: Driving the tractors up and down the road! You are your own boss and you can't get fired from your job.

Brenda: Is Daddy a good boss?

Harold Dean: All right.

Staff: Do you ever disagree with him on the way to do things?

Harold Dean: Sometimes.

Staff: Harold, are there any lessons you had to learn the hard way?

Harold: I always thought I was right, but in the long run I found my daddy was right. That's the way it is.

Mrs. Delano: You save your money, don't you Harold Dean? You don't waste it, do you?

Harold Dean: Sometimes.

Harold: He spends my money.

Harold Dean: I keep my money and spend his.

Staff: Brenda, do you drive tractors too?

Brenda: Yeah, I guess I'm the back-up. When Harold Dean is in school and they are really busy, I will go out and disk. When he gets home from school, he'll get on the tractor. I help especially when they are threshing wheat because they are trying to get their beans in at the same time. Harold's daddy will be planting, Harold will be threshing, and that leaves me to disk while Harold Dean's in school. When he gets home he takes over.

Mrs. Delano: Do you remember the first time you started disking and Harold Dean had to get out to see if you were doing it right?

Harold: I taught Harold Dean how to disk and then he taught his mother how to disk.

Brenda: Most of the time when we need to know something we go to Pop Pop. They give Pop Pop the hardest time now, I reckon. They are always fussing at him about something, like if he's going too slow or he can't hear them. Harold Dean catches a lot of flack from the kids at school about having to go home to work, but he likes the money.

Harold and Vernon Delano cut hay and Harold Dean follows behind to kick it.

Brenda: When Harold Dean learned how to disk, he taught me. Harold and I can get a little excited with each other when we're out there trying to get something done. Harold's not very patient with you when he's trying to teach you something. One year Harold Dean and I disked about 400 acres of land for small grain. That was before we got that buggy with the spout on it to fill the planter up. See, Harold's daddy and I would be doing the planting. We couldn't lift the big bags of seed up by ourselves so he poured the beans into a bucket and I'd pour the bucket of beans into the planter. We did that for a long time. Now with the buggy, we don't have to do that any more. I run all their errands for them. I keep them going, help them move stuff, and feed them a lot in the fields.

Harold: We have a nice picnic in the fields sometimes when we get rushed up and don't have time to go home.

Mrs. Delano: Sometimes Vernon will be one place working and Harold at another. Harold will tell Brenda to go down and check on Daddy to see if he's all right. About 2:00, she'll go down and check on him and carry him some food.

Brenda: If you see Mr. Delano's truck on the side of the road during hunting season, stop and he'll hand you his lunch box. He does that to everybody. He's real friendly with his lunch.

Mrs. Delano: When he's hunting, he's got a great big old lunch box. He says, "Virginia, fill that thing up. You know Harold's going in there." Harold Dean will get something out of it and everybody else that's hunting will get a homemade biscuit or a piece of fresh fried chicken, or homemade cake. Sometimes I think they all get into that lunch box and Vernon comes up short.

Staff: Mrs. Delano, you used to make hot biscuits. Do you still do that?

Mrs. Delano: I do, yes. Three times a day! I always use the wood stove to cook breakfast, even in the summer. Harold eats breakfast down here every morning. He comes down and drinks his cup of coffee, and they line up what they are going to do for the rest of the day. If Brenda happens to be going somewhere, Harold will come in and eat his lunch.

Harold: Eating biscuits was born into me. Brenda makes biscuits now too.

Mrs. Delano: She makes good biscuits. She's a good cook.

Staff: Did you teach her how to make them?

Mrs. Delano: I don't think so.

Brenda: She tried.

Harold: The first time she made biscuits, she got mad at them. I don't know what she did but she made them too hard. She fussed at me and said, "Go on down to your mother's and eat." Then she threw the biscuits out the door and broke the cement, they were so hard!

Mr. Delano: She can make good bread now. When I eat lunch or dinner up there, she always has those biscuits for me.

Brenda: My problem is if she tries to tell me a recipe, it's a little bit of this and a little bit of that.

Mrs. Delano: I don't have any written down recipes. I make my own shortening. When people butcher hogs, they usually don't want the fat so I take that. Vernon will bring it in here and I take that fat and cut it up in little blocks and put it in a kettle on my wood stove. Then I cook it till the lard is about done and take it up. Cracklings are the dried up fat. I put the crackling in biscuits, and all my children love 'em. "Mama, make some crackling biscuits." Instead of using the lard, I put in a hand full of crackling. I also make scrabble and souse.

Staff: It's so interesting how you all still make a lot of the things you use. Most people just go to the store and buy what they need.

Mrs. Delano: We used to make our own flour but we don't any more. When Vernon used to thresh wheat, he would save so many bushels for us. He would get different people to help him carry the grain to the mill in Ashland, and they would grind it for him and put it in 25 pound sacks. With the six children here, it would last almost a year. I used to sew the children's clothes, and I even made some of the boys' shirts. I've sewn a many a time in my day. I've been a busy woman. I had all six children in school at one time. In the morning when they would leave here to go meet the bus, it was like a big storm had blown over. And when I saw them coming in the evenings, I'd better have supper on the table.

Staff: Don't you make rugs and quilts too?

Mrs. Delano: I've been making rugs for 50 years. My mother used to make one or two. All that long ago, they wore their clothes out and didn't have many scraps left to fool with, just thin cotton. I mostly make mine out of wool because I think they are prettier. I haven't kept track of how many I've made but I reckon they would load Vernon and Harold's ten-wheeler. People have bought rugs from me from New York, Delaware, Maryland, Ohio, Florida, and Texas. I've got rugs all over the place.

Staff: How long does it take you to make a rug?

Mrs. Delano: I've slowed down now. I can make one in less than a week, just in my spare time. I have made a pile of rugs in my day. My quilts, they go like hot cakes. I haven't done any quilting this winter. I just didn't get around to it. Once I made a pretty quilt and Vernon said, "Don't you sell that quilt." I said, "Well, I want $150 for it. I need the money for Christmas, but I hate to sell it." He ran his hand in his pockets and came out with $150 and said, "Here, keep that quilt." Another time, he paid me for one and I sold it too.

Mrs. Delano has been braiding rugs for fifty years.

after she churned. That made good biscuits too. Some people drink buttermilk but it doesn't suit me. I don't even like milk straight from the cow. The others would drink it all the time, but I'd go to the store and get my milk. Harold Dean was three when they milked the cows, and he'd get his little bucket and milk that bucket full before they got finished. We've still got one old Guernsey. We just don't want to get rid of her.

Staff: When you started out farming, did you just farm what you owned?

Mr. Delano: No, I also farmed some land in Warsaw and Ethel. I had 250 acres that I used to farm by myself. Harold would help me a little bit.

Staff: How many acres do you farm now?

Harold: Well, round about 1100 acres. That keeps us real busy.

Staff: Do you go from one thing to another all year round? Do you ever get a breather?

Harold: Between small grain and corn, we have maybe a month when it's not real hectic. We still have to do odds and ends like getting machinery straight for the fall season. Right now, we have about 50 head of cattle, and we work hay too. We clean our own seed. We clean about 800 bushels of beans.

Mr. Delano: We used to milk eight cows, and I sold the cream to Warsaw Creamery. We gave the milk to the hogs.

Brenda: They had a cream separator up on the farm. It's neat to watch because the milk runs out one side and the cream runs out the other. A lot of people used to come down here and get that buttermilk from her

Staff: Harold Dean, what would you say is the most important thing you have learned from your grandfather?

Harold Dean: How to raise the animals, how to milk the cows, and how to work up the land and raise the crops.

Brenda: When Harold Dean first learned how to disk, Pop Pop sat on the steps of the tractor cab and rode with him all day long, bouncing up and down on that tractor.

Mr. Delano: I was a bit younger then.

Mrs. Delano: When they were baling up straw one time, Harold didn't think much of putting Harold Dean on the tractor to bale straw. Vernon said, "Yes, indeed, he's old enough." So Harold rode around the field with him one time and that was all it took. And when Harold Dean got through with that field he said, "I wish we had more to bale." He just thought that was fun.

Staff: How long is your typical day?

Harold: Anywhere from 12 to 14 hours. We might get up, get situated, and go grease up the tractors. Then I'll get Daddy started disking, and I'll start planting beans. We'll work until about 11:00, come home to get something to eat, and then go back in the fields. About 3:30 Harold Dean will come and take Daddy's place disking, and we'll keep working until about 6:00. Daddy will go on home and feed up for us while we stay in the field. Then about 7:00 we'll start slowing down, turn everything off, and go on home. We do most of our own repairs, just minor things, not the major stuff. What really slows us down is there's no place around here that sells parts. We've got to go all the way to Richmond to get parts. Sometimes we have to order the parts and have to wait on them.

Mrs. Delano: Martha Delano once said that many people think a farmer is just an ignorant old man stumbling through the field. But she said that farmers are smart people. They do some painting, carpentry work, and secretarial work. They are electricians, mechanics, chemists, veterinarians, biologists, and accountants. I didn't realize they did that much but they do.

Staff: Harold Dean, what do you think you will be doing 20 years from now?

Harold Dean: I'll probably be farming too.

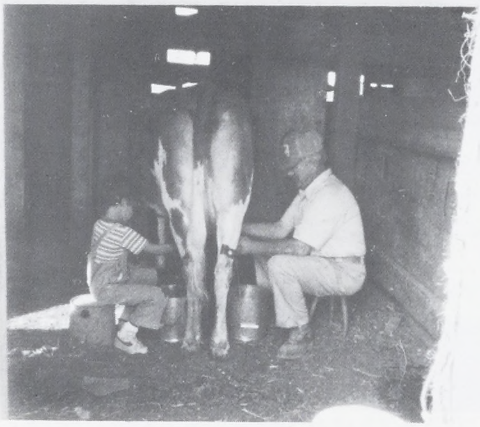
Staff: Do you think it will be any different?

Harold Dean: It might. You never know. The tractors might be different shapes and sizes. Farming will be more computerized and faster. Farmers might not have as much land to work because different people might have bought up all the land.

Brenda: Harold, your daddy used to have an old bull that was mean, didn't he?

Harold: He had a Guernsey bull one time. Daddy, Mama, and I went up where he was and Mama had some kind of perfume on. The bull was kind of high strung and a little bit mean. Daddy and I were running a fence when that bull got a whiff of Mama's perfume.

Mrs. Delano: I was standing on the back porch of the old house at Cottage Farm and here came that bull. Great God, I opened the old screen door and went inside. And that bull stayed right there and got to bellowing. One night Vernon and I were up there in the house wrapping up some old trash beef for the dog. The front door was open. All at once I said, "My God, Vernon, the bull's coming in the house." That bull would fight and follow you anywhere you went. He was a rank one. Another time, we were out there at the dog pen. He started after us and we ran around behind the dog pen. We rolled our feet over that fence and got on top of the dog house. And there we were in the dog pen on top of the dog house. After a while he quieted down but still stood there, and we rolled out of there and down under an electric fence to get out of the way of him. He was mean. He didn't like anybody, I'll tell you right now. Vernon soon got rid of him. Those Guernsey bulls, the older they get the meaner they are.



From an early age Harold Dean helped Pop Pop with the milking.

Staff: When you're planning your days do you listen to the weather forecasts?

Harold: About half the time. We listen to the weather report when we are in hay because we don't want it to rain on the hay. Same way with beans, we don't want to plant them and have a rain come on them and pack them because then we might

Threshing wheat

have to plant them over. The forecast plays a right good part of our daily routine.

Staff: Isn't there anything about farming that you wish had never changed?

Harold: What we've been through with the farming ... I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Mrs. Delano: This is just about the good old days, right now.

Harold: I really wouldn't prefer for things to go back to the old way because that was a lot of hard work. Now the equipment is better and it's a little easier. But we still get the same prices now as Daddy did when he started farming. We get better yields but the prices are still the same.

Mrs. Delano: There's always something different on a farm. We've had a lot of fun, I'm telling you that right now.

Brenda: Mostly what I like is we are all together, and go and do and laugh. Like Harold Dean said, you're your own boss and we all have a good time. We get mad at each other every now and then, say a few words, and go on.

Mr. Delano and Harold Dean fill the planter with soybeans to be planted in the wheat straw.

Career with Farm Bureau Offers Robert Delano Worldwide Experiences

by Mary Haywood and Crystal Simpson

President Reagan meets with Elizabeth Dole, Special Assistant to the President; Robert Delano, President of American Farm Bureau; and John Block, Secretary of Agriculture.

"After I first began farming in 1946, I got interested in a farm organization known as Farm Bureau. When the Farm Bureau reorganized to form separate county organizations, I was the first president of the Richmond County Farm Bureau. I later served on the Board of Directors of the Virginia Farm Bureau representing a district of several counties in this area. In 1963, I was elected president of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, and I served as president for 17 years. This was a full-time job. I had to adapt my farming operations to my job with Farm Bureau. I continued to farm though I had to work it in on weekends or nights. When you are much younger, you can do these things.

"Many people sometimes misinterpret the purpose of Farm Bureau. They think its main purpose is to provide insurance. That's not the original purpose, but it just so happens that it has been a successful economic venture. However, Farm Bureau's main purpose is to serve as a lobbying organization for farmers. During my years with the Virginia Farm Bureau, we lobbied strongly for a state sales tax. The bureau felt that one fair way to increase revenue for the government was through a sales tax which taxed everyone, not just those who own personal property or real estate. We also asked for exemptions for farmers. Farmers don't pay sales tax on items that enter into further production such as fertilizer, feed, seed, and most farm supplies.

"I was later elected to the Board of Directors for the American Farm Bureau Federation which is headquartered in Chicago and has a legislative office and staff in Washington, D. C. where we lobby. I was in the dairy business for about 20 years. Then as I began to travel, it was difficult to run a dairy so I phased that out. I had some beef cattle and some hogs. As I traveled more, it was easier to plant a crop, travel

Robert Delano discusses agricultural related issues with President Bush.

until harvest time, then come home to harvest the crop. I had a grain operation during that period of time. The major crops I raised were corn, wheat, and soybeans.

"When I was elected to American, that meant traveling to Chicago so I commuted for six years. I left on Monday morning or Sunday night and came back home on Friday night. I would drive to Richmond and fly out. I'd spend a week in Chicago or somewhere else in the country or the world.

"With my position in the American Farm Bureau, I was a lobbyist. I was in during the Reagan years and had the opportunity six or seven times a year to be in the White House. The prime minister of Japan was to meet with President Reagan for trade negotiations. Prior to the meeting, Bill Brock, Ambassador of Trade, and I met with President Reagan. When asked, I offered the President some advice. The next day when I read a Washington paper, I realized that he had followed it. It makes you feel good when you offer a suggestion and the President uses it.

"Most of my tours around the world were about trade. I had the opportunity to go to all of the states in the United States. During the period I worked for American, we were very active in trade negotiations with the Europeans and Australians. It meant several trips to Europe, Australia, Japan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and Buenos Aries. The only continent I've never been in is Africa. I went to the Soviet Union for two weeks in 1979. I met with the Minister of Agriculture who at that time was a fellow named Gorbachev. I might not have remembered his name had he not later become an important world figure. We worked with the trade office of governments. I was the private sector representative for agriculture. There was also a government sector representative. We met with Mitterrand, the president of France and Kohl, the chancellor of West Germany.

"What we were trying to do was reduce trade barriers between countries. There will never be completely free trade because of the politics involved. The politicians want to protect the domestic producers in their countries. In real free trade, those who can produce a product the most economically should be the ones that ship it around the world. Trade is extremely important. There is no way U. S. agriculture can survive unless we are able to trade our products around the world.

"Subsidization is one of the trade issues now. Europe is heavily subsidized, particularly the farmers in France, Germany, and to a degree, Great Britain. We are trying to come to a general agreement on tariffs and trade so that those countries will reduce their subsidies, we'll reduce ours, and we can have relatively free trade.

"The North American Free Trade Agreement is now a hot issue. We are attempting to make North America a trade zone so that the products can be sold back and forth across the borders at Canada and Mexico. However, if we have a trade agreement that is too broad, as it improves the lot for some, others may be hurt.

"One of the most interesting things about traveling was to see how differently things are done in other countries. We've seen French, German, Japanese, and New Zealand agriculture. The biggest contrast to the U. S. would be Mexico because of the poverty. There is subsistence agriculture there. The Japanese have a very sophisticated agriculture. They have small plots and little combines, maybe no more than 30 inches wide, that they use to combine the rice. Rice is a sacred crop in Japan. The Japanese won't let any of our rice into their country, and that's a big issue. I didn't see a lawn mower the whole time I was in Japan because they raise rice right up to the bushes around the house. It's the staple of the population.

Mr. Delano is greeted by Japanese agricultural leaders.

WELCOME
US DELEGATION OF FARMERS ORGANIZATIONS
歓迎 米国農業団体代表団

Mr. and Mrs. Robert Delano (at far right) traveled to Japan with a delegation of U. S. farm organizations for trade related meetings.

"When I decided to retire from the American Farm Bureau, I came home. Then I was asked to come back as the president of Virginia Farm Bureau. I went in for one year and started a second. In September of the next year, Jim Baker, President Bush's campaign manager, and Lee Atwater asked me if I would come to Washington and head up the agricultural end of the 1988 presidential campaign. I worked during the campaign period. It has been an interesting career, but I've always tried to keep my tie by coming home every weekend. There are some things that you lose by being gone all the time. A whole generation grows up and you don't know them.

Robert Delano admires the horse as he chats with Argentine farmers about their farming practices.

"Let's go back 300 years..."

Mr. Delano speaks to the Richmond County Young Farmers on the history of agriculture in Richmond County.

"Let's go back 300 years. When the settlers first came to this area around 1692, it was a land of opportunity. Most in this area came from England escaping religious persecution, but they came to this land of real opportunity with unlimited possibilities. The first kind of agriculture was subsistence. They settled along the rivers first because traveling by water was the only means of transportation. Much of the early agriculture was along the water where the Indians had left a few patches that they had been working and then moved along when the land sort of wore out. The first thing the farmers had to do was open up the forests so that they could produce. Until tobacco came along, there were no cash crops. The early settlers shipped tobacco to England. There was very little else that they could sell because no one had any money. Cash was hard to come by. It was a barter existence. For example, you might trade a horse or a cow to a neighbor or you made butter and bartered it for salt, sugar, and coffee.

"When there was subsistence farming, you had to spend a lot of time raising produce to feed your family. With the exception of the two large farms in our county, Mt. Airy and Sabine Hall, most of the farms have been small, 150 to 200 acres, mainly because that was all that could be worked even with hired help.

"Every farmer had a diversified operation. He kept cattle and hogs, and raised corn, wheat, and barley. Remember, soybeans, one of the best cash crops, didn't come in until World War II. It took little money to live on. You had to buy kerosene, pepper, salt, and molasses. You made your own bread. People raised their own corn to grind into corn meal. You raised wheat for flour. You had your own cows and made your own butter. You raised hogs, killed them in the fall, and salted some pork for your winter supply. Game was plentiful. We were lucky to have all these natural products in the area that people could eat.

"Over a period of years, farmers began to clear more land. They brought in draft animals, horses, and later mules, to work the land. This was well before the days of electricity. Some people had wells, but others drank from springs. When we got electricity, that was great! It revolutionized agriculture and the lifestyle of people. Things evolved and farmers became more efficient, particularly with the introduction of the tractor. You could plow an acre or two a day with a horse or mule, but you could plow five to ten a day with a tractor. As the tractors got larger, you could plow 25 to 50 acres a day. The efficiency of production improved in agriculture over the years to the point where we now have had a complete change in agriculture. At one time, every person had his own cow, kept pigs, had a smoke house, and raised a big garden. But now, it's more economical to pay someone who is efficient in the production of a given product than it is to produce it individually. What worries me is if everybody is part of the service populace, who is going to do the production? Agricultural production now is down to less than 2% of the people in the United States. They raise all the food and fiber for the 250 million people in this country, plus export to other countries in the world. You can see how much things have changed.

"I am a firm believer in trends. We built from small, subsistence farms into large operations. Then came some depressions. After the Civil War, the big operations were split into smaller operations. People owned the land, but they didn't have any labor. That's when the sharecropping system started. Then the farms began to build up again in the late 1800's. They were in the process of building large acreages when the Great Depression occurred. That's when they again went back to small operations. It was 40 acres and a mule. That was the expression they used. That was when the government began to create programs that were helpful to farmers. It allowed good farmers who couldn't obtain credit to get it. After World War II, the trend moved back to larger farms. I predict we'll eventually go through some type of economic situation that will cause us to go back to small farms. I may not live to see it, but if we look at the trends, it is going to happen.

"The export market has been the salvation of the American farmer. The success of agriculture in the U. S. is dependent upon the export market. If the export market would suddenly be cut off, the surpluses would begin to back up as they did in the 30's when they burned corn, put dye on potatoes, and slaughtered pigs to get rid of surpluses so prices could rise again. Some people say that can't happen again, but I say it can. If the export markets will continue to be open, we will have some degree of prosperity in this country.

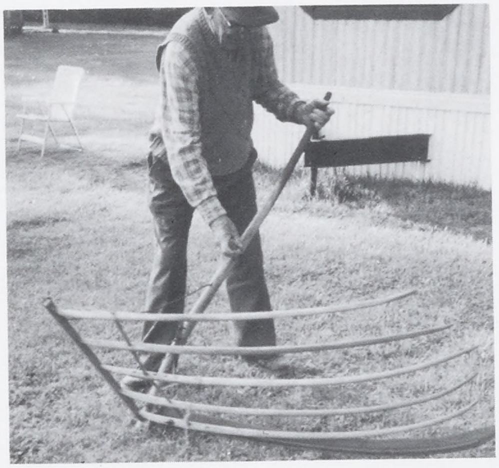
"I don't know what the future holds. No one knows, but I think Richmond County farmers can compete with any other farmers around the world. We use the latest methods, and with modern communications we know what is going on across the U. S. There might be some changes that we can't predict, development of new crops that we haven't heard of or technical development of machines. You might be able to sit on your porch and program your tractor to go out and plow the field. Through genetics, there is unlimited potential for development of plants and animals. There are unlimited possibilities for the future."

Looking Back...

by Lesley Lowery

Cradling Wheat

Recalled by Berry Sanders



Mr. Sanders demonstrates his cradling technique.

"My father brought me a cradle that he got in Baltimore. He went by steamboat and brought it back. It was a four fingered cradle. This one you've brought with you is five fingered, and it will kill you. It's a whole lot heavier. With my cradle, I could go right out there and cut wheat with one hand. You get used to it.

"When I was about 18 or 19, I used to cut the wheat, and Colie Marks would rake it up and tie it. We didn't even have any twine so they used the wheat itself to tie a bundle, by twisting the heads just so. If I made 50 cents a day, I'd done a good day's work.

"There would be three cradles going at the same time. We would sing when we were cutting. You could tell with that little cradle when the blade hit the wheat. Crash, crash, right on in rhythm with the song. We didn't have to sing but we'd do it. We did so doggone much singing. You didn't have to have a special song, just so you were singing. One song I sang went, 'What you start with in the morning, try to keep it up all day.....' I sang that a lot when I carried the lead row.

Our staff carried a five fingered cradle, which belongs to Randy Packett, on our interview with Mr. Sanders. It inspired him to reminisce about his wheat cradling days.

"Sometimes we'd stop to sharpen our blades. We carried a small paddle for this. We'd put tar on it with sand on top of that and strike it against the blade. It would sharpen that blade in no time, just like sand paper. Yes sir, exactly like that. We sang this while we sharpened our blades to a quick beat:

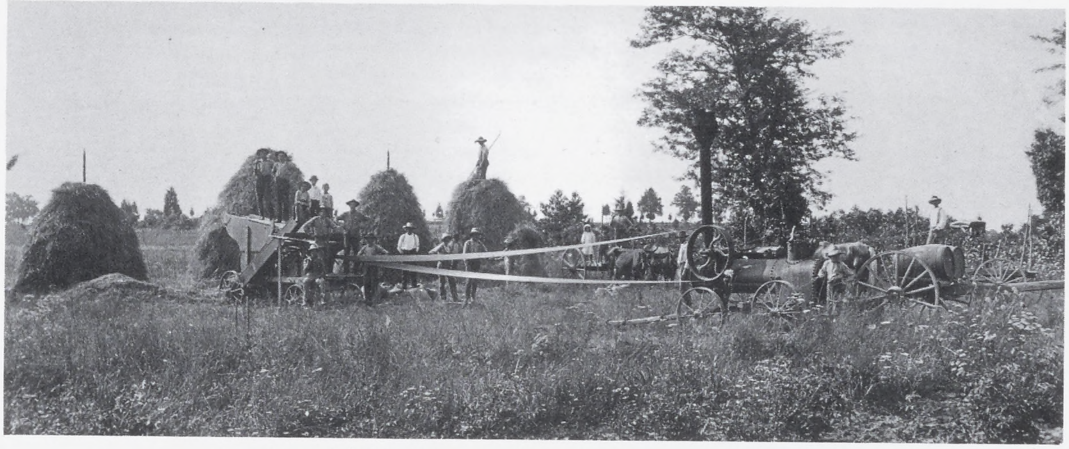
Sift the meal
She'd give me the husk.
Bake the bread
She'd give me the crust.
Fried the meat
She'd give me the skin...

"You carried your paddle in the spokes of your cradle. That way you'd never lose it, see. If you didn't keep the blades sharp, the wheat would 'slav over' we called it. It wouldn't cut it clean.

"After the wheat was stacked up, they'd come along with the wagon pulled by two horses. They put the wheat in the wagon and took it to the thresher. The Delano boys owned it then. The first thresher was owned by the Fones boys, old man Bell's boys. They had a thresher and a gristmill."

The Day the Thresher Came

Recalled by Russell Bronner



A complete threshing operation. Photo courtesy of Ben Franklin

"It was something to see the thresher roll in! I was real small, about five years old, the first time I remember the thresher coming to our farm, around 1925. The day before the thresher came, the men brought a load of wood and a cart with two barrels on it for water. The thresher was run by a steam boiler, and they used the wood to fire the boiler, to make the steam. It's a wonder it didn't burn everything up. Sparks would fly out of that thing. I was a small kid, and I had to stand back and watch. They wouldn't let me get close to it.

"Usually, the thresher came to the larger farms, and the smaller farmers brought their wheat in wagons. Farmers brought bundles of wheat that they had cut and bound with a binder. It took three good horses to pull our binder. It was hard on the horses, with the heat and all the flies bothering them. Later we made something out of an old automobile that pulled the binder.

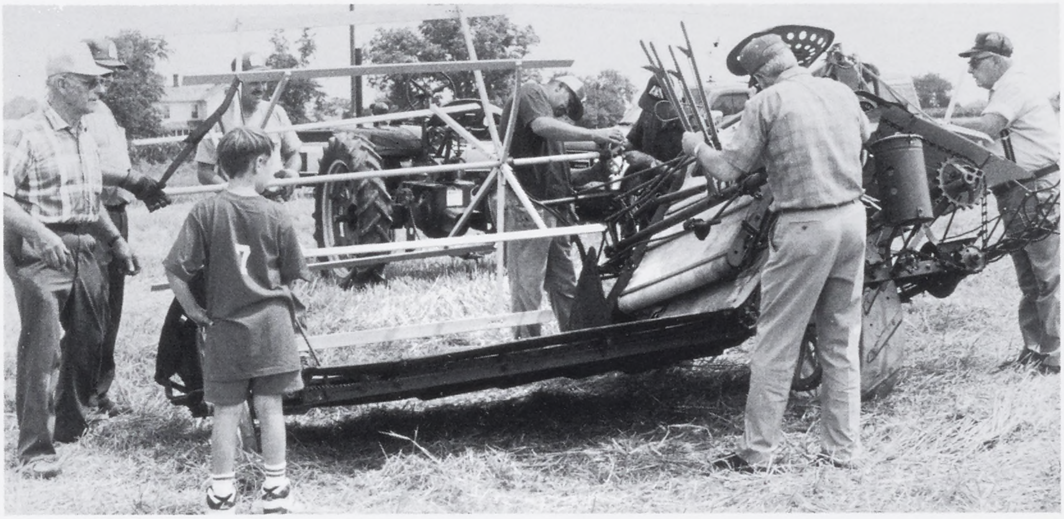
"So when the thresher came, the wheat was already in bundles. They would feed the bundles into the thresher, and the straw would come out the back. Somebody with a horse and rail would rail the straw off to where they were stacking it. A rail, like they used to have in rail fences, was hooked to the horse. One man stood on the rail and pulled all the straw across to the stacks. There were other people standing at the thresher to bag the wheat.

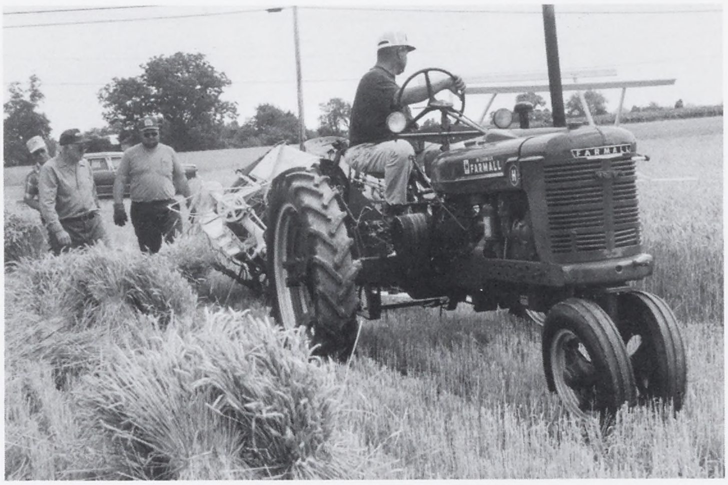
"Wheat had to be cut when it was a little green so that it wouldn't shatter when it was being handled. It was usually around the middle of June when they cut and shocked it. It was shocked in the field. This was done by standing the bundles together. The shock was capped by putting some loose wheat on the top to shed water. If it rained, they had to go back in the field, open the shock so that the wheat could air out, and then shock it back again. With too much rain the wheat could even sprout.

"Around about the 4th of July, they started threshing. At threshing time, a lot of people were there to help, and the farmer was responsible for feeding all of them. His wife and the wives of the farmers bringing wheat would cook enough food to feed everyone. We would eat in the house or on a porch. The farmers ate first, the hands ate next, and the kids last.

"Later, we bought a thresher and used a tractor to turn it instead of a steam engine. It wasn't long before we went to combines."

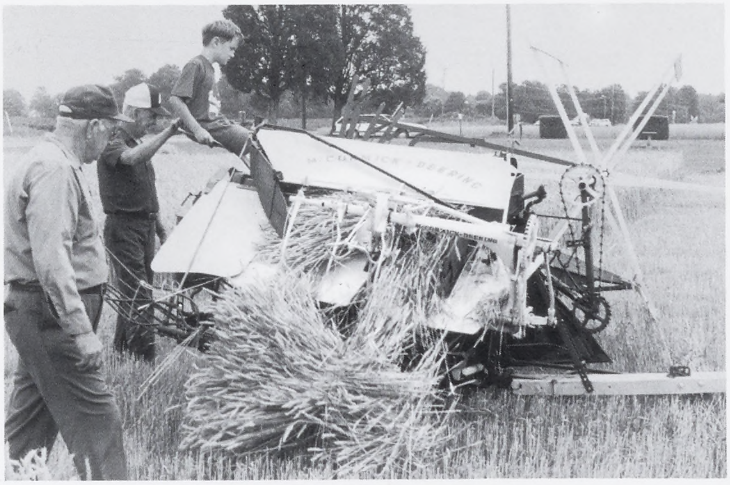
An Old-Fashioned Binder at Work





We were lucky to see local farmers demonstrate wheat binding. Robbins Douglas brought his binder to a field belonging to Roy Lee Jewell. The wheat which was bound and shocked will be threshed in October at an antique farm machinery exhibit at the Ruritan Lot near Callao.

Above: The men help Mr. Douglas, far left, truck the binder, which means getting it ready to go in the field.



Frederick Downing drives the tractor pulling the binder while others walk along behind and shock the bundles of wheat.

Allen Crowder keeps a watchful eye on his grandson as he takes a turn riding the binder. One farmer remembered that as a child, the most thrilling part of binding was when the children were able to chase rabbits as they escaped from the small section of wheat remaining in the center of the field.

Looking Back with Berry Sanders

By Mary Haywood and Lesley Lowery

Produce at Fox Hunters Hill

"A man named Lee Phillips lived at Fox Hunters Hill down on Totuskey Creek. He raised produce. He didn't have to pay anyone to haul it because he had his own vessel. He would take a whole vessel load right on to Baltimore.

"He had about three acres of watermelons, I'm just guessing, now. Before planting, he'd check the land about eight feet square. Then, he would go down to the marsh and load marsh mud into washing tubs on a wagon. He took two or three trips and threw that mud into the check. Then, he'd take his horses and throw two furrows on top of that. After the mud was covered, he'd take his hoe and break it out. Great God, he raised some of the biggest watermelons you ever saw in your life! Nobody knew how he did it, but I did.

"He had about two acres of English peas. They were the prettiest you've ever seen in your life. We went down to pick peas for him. Old man Phillips used to sit under a locust tree, the same one that's down there now, and punch our cardboards. Everybody who picked peas had to have a card. After you picked a bucket of peas, you took your card to him and he'd punch a hole in it and that was five cents. But he never gave me a cent until Saturday came, and he counted the holes up in the cardboard, and that's the way you got paid. You got due bills, little round, thick papers, good at the store, but not money."

A trip to the Gristmill

"There was a gristmill down Islington road. It was owned by the Fones boys, old man Bell Fones' four boys. My father would fill a cotton bag not quite half full with corn and put it on old Dixie, the horse. He'd break it down across the old horse's shoulder and send me on to the mill. I was a little thing sitting up there, no bigger than the bag of corn. When I got there Mr. Fones would take the bag and grind the corn to meal. He put me and the bag back on the horse. I'd go on home by myself. I thought I was doing something great, going to the mill."

Illustration by Mary Haywood

A Lesson Learned

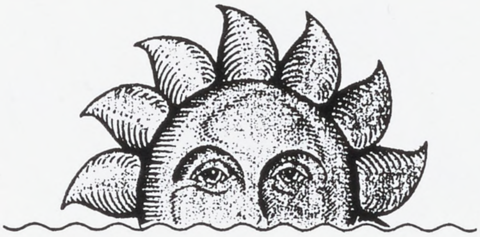
By Lesley Lowery

Illustration by Martha Bronner Blankenship

"I was about 13 or 14 years old. There were two of us in high school, my older brother Ernest and myself. He was going to graduate and I wasn't passing my work. My father said that he wasn't going to hire anyone to work the farm as long as he had me sitting up in school not learning anything. So he kept me out of school from January on of that year. I stayed home and farmed. I'd be in the lower field plowing, with two horses and a single plow. The wire grass was so thick, it sounded like a sheet ripping when you plowed. It was a big field. I'd hook up the horses and make about half a dozen rounds and then I had to take them home and feed them. They ate and rested while I ate lunch. I made about 6 times around the field in half a day. I was walking and I was cutting about 8 inches at a time. I was walking, remember that!

Everybody else was at school having a big time going to baseball games and all. I was home farming. The next year I went back to school and I passed everything from then on. I had had enough of that...It was a good lesson. I guess it was the best lesson that I ever had during my youth."

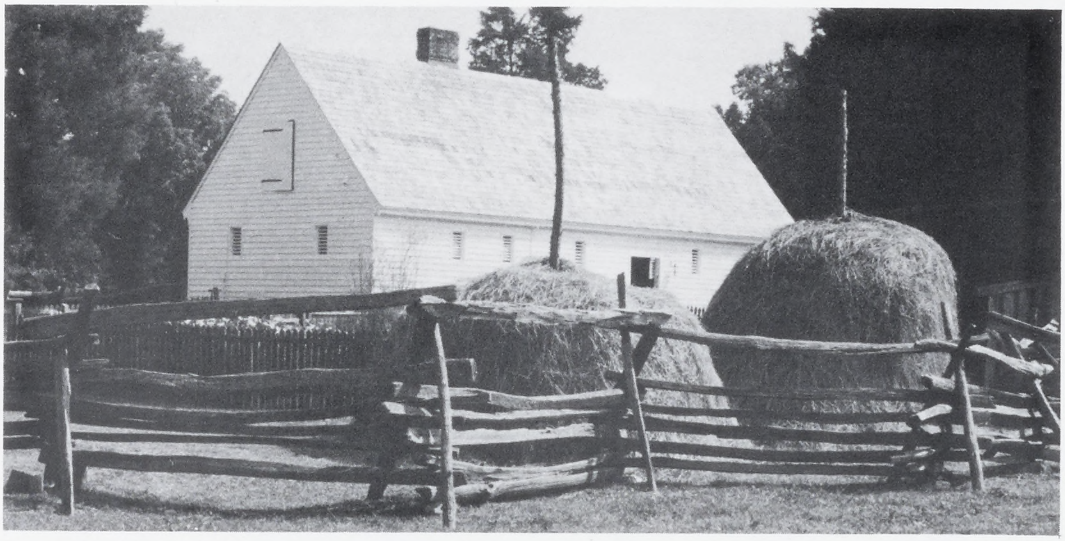
As told by Russell Bronner



Make Hay While the Sun Shines

As Told by Russell Bronner

by Mary Haywood and Lesley Lowery



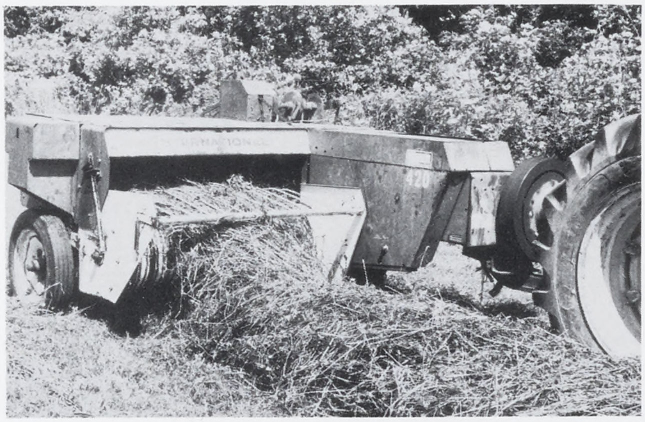
"We used to cut the hay with a horse drawn mower. We usually let it lay three days. If it rained we were in trouble. We didn't have any way of kicking or fluffing it, so we just had to let it lay until it was dry again. We raked the hay into piles in the field and put it on a wagon. We had a rake pulled by horse that would rake until it filled up, and then we had to stop and dump the hay in piles. We'd fork it on the wagon and take it to the barn. We filled the barn loft first and the rest was stacked outside.

"When we went to the hay stack, it was my job to stack it. The others forked it off to me and I shaped the stack, so it would shed rain. With one hand around the pole and a little short fork in the other, I would make sure the stack wouldn't be lopsided.

"Some stacks were close enough to the barn, so that we could fence them off and turn the animals out and let them eat. The hay would slip down the pole as they ate it. Or sometimes we would put a ladder up the stack and throw off some hay every day for the livestock.

"A big improvement in the handling of hay was the hay baler. Our first baler had a motor on it. There were balers like ours that you could bring to the barn and bale hay, if you wanted to sell it. But ours went in the field and we pulled it with a small tractor and baled hay in the field. We hauled the bales in by wagon and put them in the barn. It is always the hottest weather when you're working in hay, 95-100 degrees.

"Now we bale in big bales, and it's a whole lot different. There is a lot less work. Nowadays, we cut hay, fluff it up, rake it, and put it in these big bales. We pick it up with a front-end loader and put it on a trailer or truck to take it wherever we are going to store it. All the handling is done by machinery. It's a different operation altogether, not at all like being on top of a haystack."



Top right, the hay that has been raked into rows is picked up by the baler and baled into small bales. The bales are stacked on the wagon to be stored in a barn.

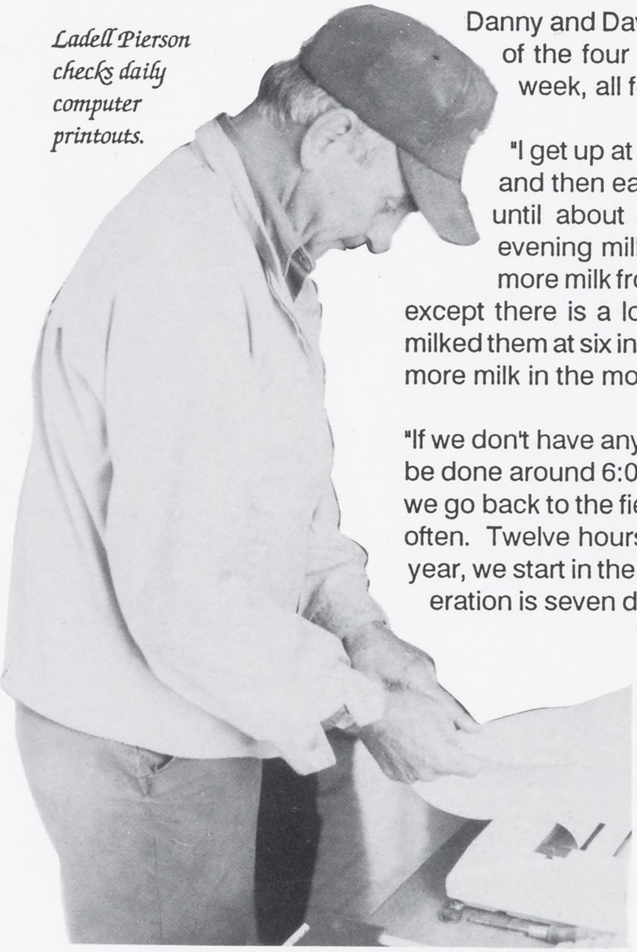
Below, in recent times many farmers have gone to baling their hay in big bales because it cuts out much of the manual labor.

On the

At Tidewater Dairy Farm

With Ladell Pierson

by Lauren Block, Mary Haywood, Lesley Lowery, Kathy Morse, Nathan Richards, Michelle Schools, and Crystal Simpson



Ladell Pierson checks daily computer printouts.

"Tidewater Dairy Farm is the only dairy farm in the Northern Neck except for one in Leedstown which is almost in King George. There used to be fifteen dairy farms in Richmond County. My father started in the dairy business in October 1945. When I was fourteen, my father was taken sick. I had to quit school to take over the dairy, and I've been doing this for the last 44 years. My brother Oren and my two sons, Danny and David, help operate the business now. One of the four of us is off every weekend. During the week, all four of us do the milking.

"I get up at 5:45. We milk at 6:00, finish around 9:00, and then eat breakfast. Then we go out in the fields until about 3:30 when we head back to start the evening milking around 4:00. We get about a third more milk from the morning milking. I don't know why except there is a longer time between milkings. But if we milked them at six in the morning and six at night, we'd still get more milk in the morning.

"If we don't have any trouble during the evening milking, we'll be done around 6:00 and we'll eat dinner. When we're busy, we go back to the fields after dinner, but we try not to do that often. Twelve hours a day is long enough. For most of the year, we start in the dark and finish in the dark. The dairy operation is seven days a week, 365 days a year! I tell everybody if they want to talk to me on the phone to call me at 9:00 in the morning or 6:00 in the evening because I'm always at the house for meals at those times.

"I've been on four vacations for three days at a time. I milked 17 years straight and didn't miss two milkings in a row. I have milked as many as three straight years without missing a milking, and my boys weren't here to help then. Our operation is a whole lot bigger now. We milk 100 to 106 cows a day and work 1200 acres of land without hiring any help. From 1945-48, we milked by hand. When I was 14, we had milking machines. We had 25 cows at that point. I have a sister, and she and I could milk a cow in five minutes by hand. When we got the milkers in 1948, my father would milk with the milkers and we still milked by hand because we were used

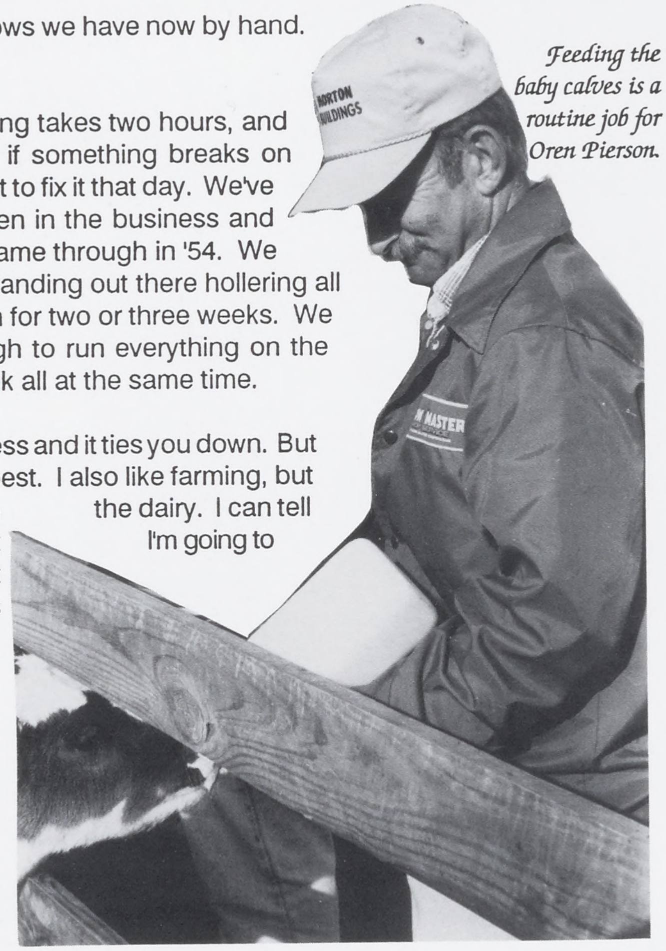
MOOOOVE

to it. You couldn't milk all these cows we have now by hand. I mean, it would be a job!

"If everything works well, the milking takes two hours, and that's if everything works. Even if something breaks on Christmas Day, somebody has got to fix it that day. We've missed one milking since I've been in the business and that was when Hurricane Hazel came through in '54. We just didn't milk. The cows were standing out there hollering all night long. It knocked production for two or three weeks. We have a generator now big enough to run everything on the farm. We can feed, milk, and cook all at the same time.

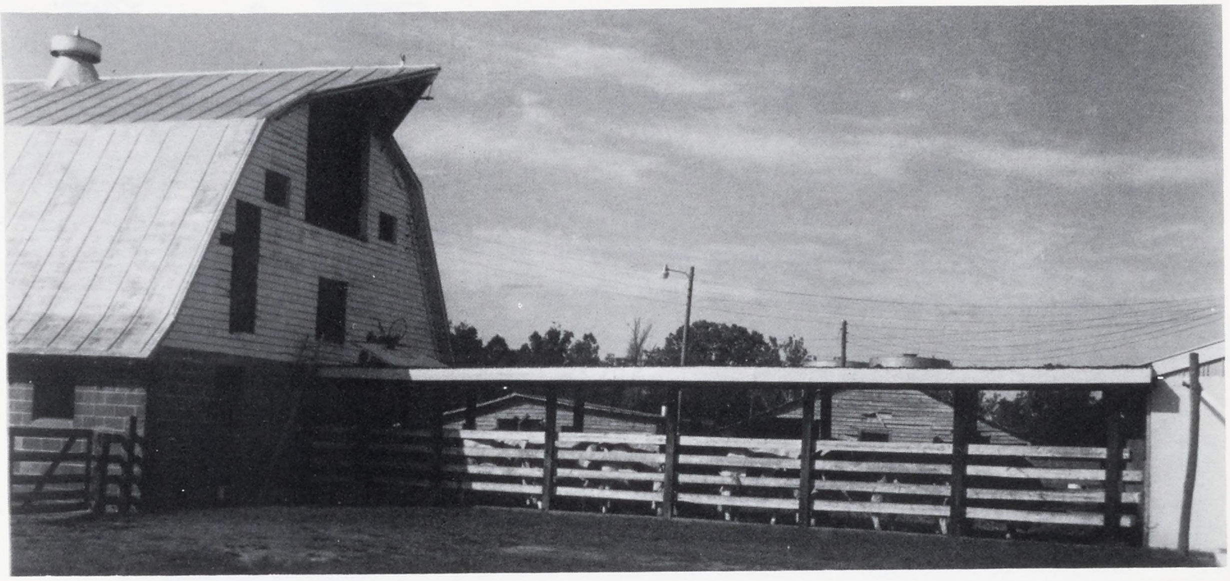
"There is a lot of work to this business and it ties you down. But I reckon the cows are what I like best. I also like farming, but your income isn't as steady as with the dairy. I can tell you right now, within $5000, what I'm going to get out of milk next year. It doesn't fluctuate a whole lot like crop yields might.

"When it gets close to milking time, the cows come in and line up without having to be called. They line up in relatively the same order each milking. That cow that is first in line is in the first eight cows every time. The last cows we milk are always the last cows to be milked all the time.



Feeding the baby calves is a routine job for Oren Pierson.

"The cows acted a little differently coming in to the milking parlor today because you are strangers. If you weren't here, they'd come right on in. If we play the radio while we milk, they won't pay any attention to noises. If we get a bunch of children in here squealing and hollering, it disturbs them because they are real sensitive. Just to show how sensitive the cows are, if we're an hour late milking them, it will knock production for three days. About once every two years, they get diarrhea for about three days and that knocks production in half. Hot weather really affects the cows. Anything over 80 degrees knocks production. If it is 90 or above and real humid, we'll lose five to six hundred pounds of production a day. Cold weather doesn't bother them. If it gets down to zero, that doesn't bother them a bit.

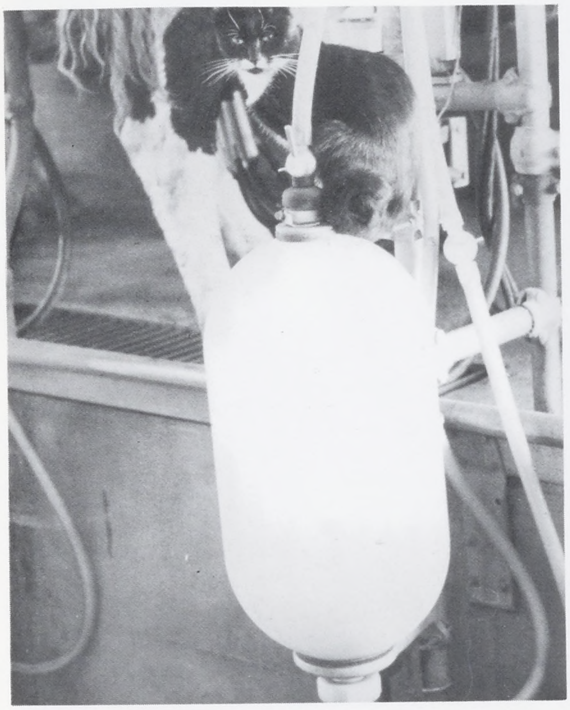


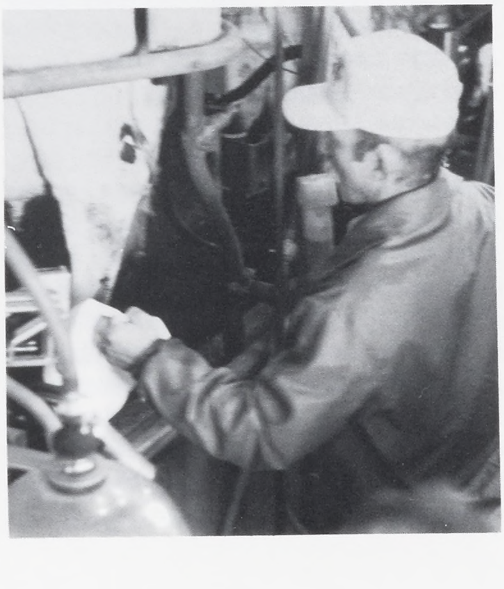
When we arrived for our interview, it was almost time for the evening milking and the cows were gathering in the barn and lining up to enter the milking parlor. It was an orderly crowd but our presence caught the attention of one curious, red and white Holstein.

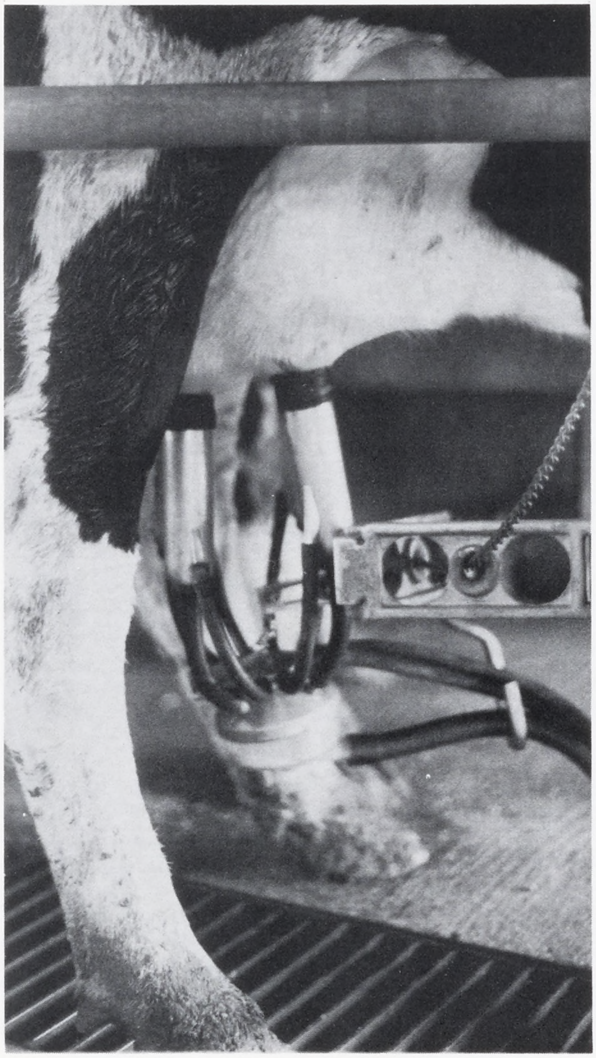
"Eight cows come into the parlor at a time. In the parlor, we operate everything automatically from the pit. We first sanitize the udder by spraying it with warm water mixed with iodine. After the udder is washed, we dry it. We use a different towel for each cow to cut down the possibility of spreading disease. Then we disinfect each teat with iodine. After we attach the milking apparatus, the machine takes over. It takes about three to five minutes to milk each cow. When the milk stops coming in, a float drops down and signals the machine to cut off. A light shows when the milk has stopped flowing, the suction is released, and the milker drops from the cow. After we milk them, we dip their teats again with iodine since the teat is still open from milking. The iodine keeps bacteria out until the teat closes up on its own, about one and a half hours later. As soon as the first bunch is milked we turn them out in a lot to feed while we continue milking.

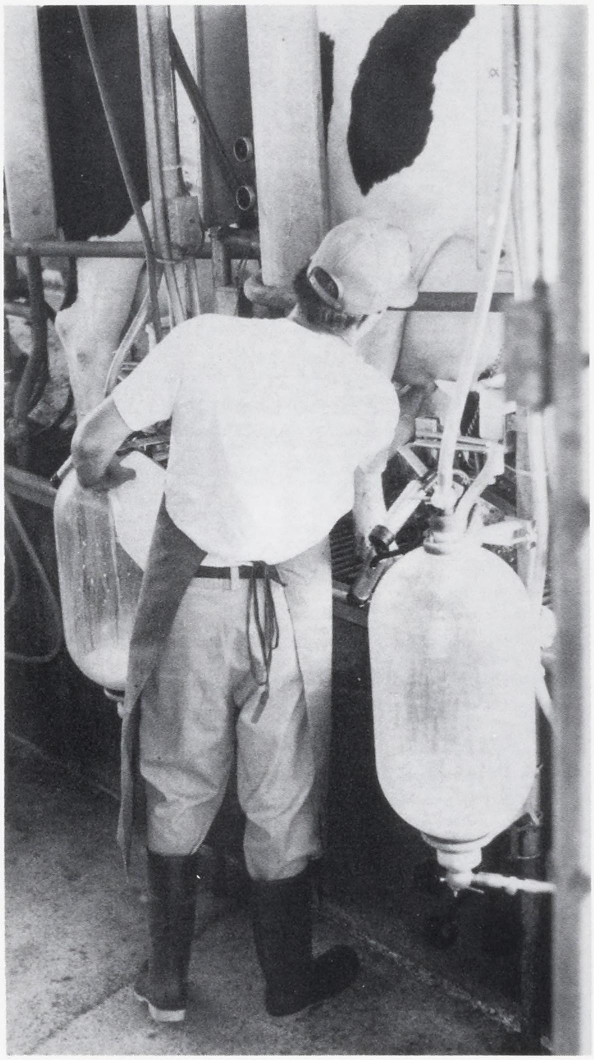
"The milk goes through pipes and into a storage tank. We have a filter which the milk is pumped through, and we have to change that each time we milk. The storage tank holds 1500 gallons. The milk goes into the tanks just like it comes from the cow. Nothing is added. There is a paddle in the center of the tank that turns ten minutes of every hour to keep the cream from rising to the top.

At milking time, everybody pitches in to help. Each of the Piersons automatically assumes his role in making the process run like clockwork. There are no interruptions as the cows enter the parlor, are milked, and move out making room for others. The cat waits patiently in hopes of getting some discarded milk when the machines are cleaned.









"The buyers don't want the cream separated. A tractor trailer comes in every other morning about 8:00 A.M. from Norfolk to load the milk. The reason they come every 48 hours is because Virginia state law says you can't hold milk longer than 52 hours. They attach a hose from the truck to the tank and pump the milk out. If a cow is on antibiotics, we put a band on her leg so nobody will miss her and we throw her milk away for four days. If a tank of milk was found to be contaminated with antibiotics, and they traced the antibiotics to my milk, then I would have to pay for that whole tank of milk. We've been selling milk since 1945 and have never lost a tank of milk. Not too many people can say that.

"The health department is very strict. We have to pass inspection every month. We don't know when they are coming, but we have to keep everything very clean. We have an automatic washer which we hook up after we milk. It cleans the floors and tanks with 180 degree water and washing powder, then rinses them with cool water. We have 19 light bulbs in the parlor, and nothing can be under 100 watt. If the health department inspector comes in here and we have one bulb burned out, they'll mark us.

"When we finish milking, we open a gate and the cows all go back in the feed lot. We feed 15 tons of grain a week. We buy a ton

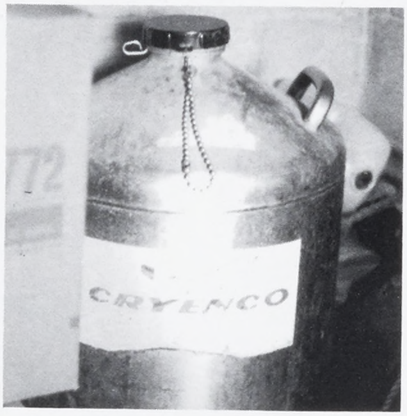
The blue ladies, cows with a blue tag around their necks, are given extra feed to maintain their production. A few of these cows give over 100 pounds of milk a day, which is over 14 gallons.

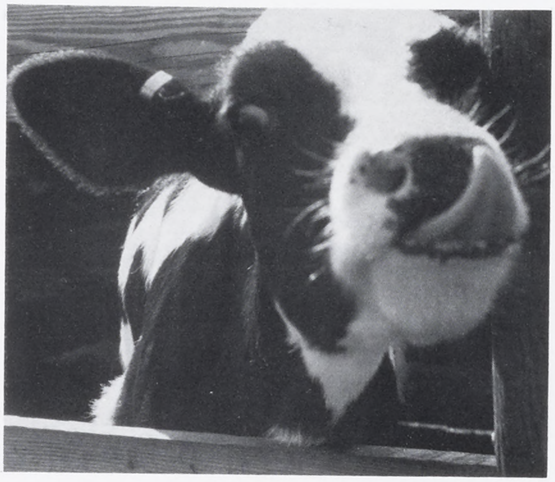
Move over, girlfriend. It's my turn.

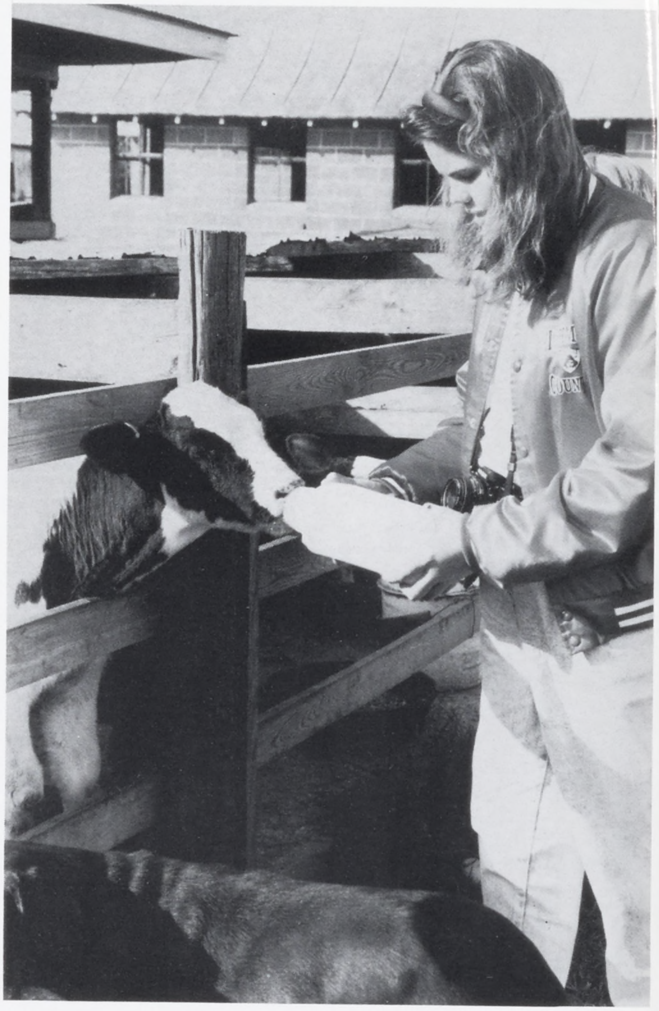
of feed a day from Southern States to feed the cows in the parlor while we're milking. That's $208 a day, seven days a week. We buy what we feed in the parlor, but we could produce that ourselves because we work enough land to do it. We work 1200 acres, and 300 of those acres produce the barley and corn to feed the cows. We feed them barley two months out of the year. The rest of the time we feed them corn. We store the feed so if we have a dry summer, we don't have to worry about running out.

"The cows eat 20 pounds of feed each day per cow in the parlor while they're being milked. They're getting enough grain in there to support 50 pounds of milk. The more milk they give, the more we feed them. If they are giving 75 pounds of milk and are only getting enough feed to support 50 pounds, it pulls the weight off their bodies. We give them extra grain so they will maintain production. We put a blue tag around these cows' necks and call them the blue ladies. The cows with blue tags around their necks are computer feeders. We have a computer at the house that we set to determine how much feed these cows can get. If one of the cows goes into the feeder without a blue tag, she can't get any feed. The tag has a number on it. When the computer reads it, it knows how much feed the cow can get. The cows have to go into the feeder on their own to

The Piersons breed their cattle using artificial insemination. The bull sperm are stored in this liquid nitrogen tank.





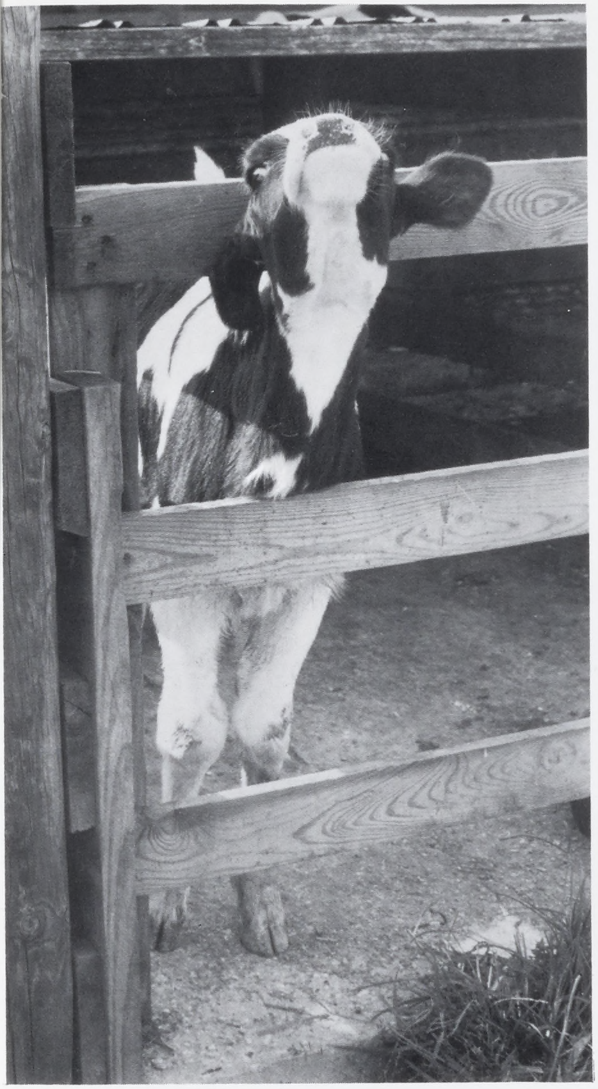


Lesley takes a turn feeding the calves.

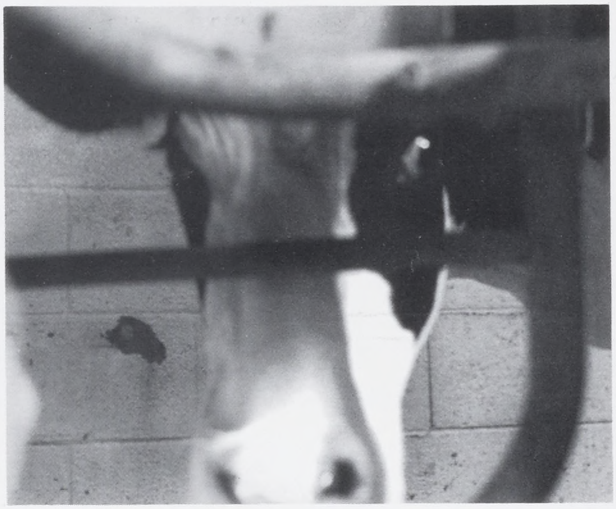
get the extra feed, and they can't get it all at once. If a cow gets 10 extra pounds, she'll have to go in the feeder ten to fifteen times a day. Every morning at 4:00 A.M., the computer prints out what each tagged cow ate the day before. That way we know how much they're eating. An alarm list prints out for any cows who are not eating, and we know if something is wrong.

"We feed them so high we burn them up. They're under stress all the time. We give them the best we can get in them and all they can eat. A cow stays with us for an average of five years. When a cow is 2 1/2 years old, it will begin giving milk. We have to cull about 15 cows a year, so we need 15 baby calves, 15 year old calves and 15 two year old calves to replace the 15 we sell. We put them on the market because something is wrong. Either their udders will go bad or their feet will go bad. They're on concrete all the time in the parlor and feeding area, and it's hard on their feet. We also sell the cows if they won't breed because if they won't breed, they won't give milk. They have to have a calf every year to keep giving milk.

"We breed them for the first time to an Angus bull so they will have calves with little heads and won't have as much trouble calving. That is the only time they are bred to a bull. We find that we have a lot less



"You'd be surprised at the children that don't know where milk comes from. You might think I'm making this up, but this is the God's honest truth. I've had people come here from the city that think black cows give chocolate milk. They think all they've got to do is go to the store and it will be there."



trouble if the cow can have the calf by herself, and she milks a whole lot better. If they have trouble the first time, that hurts the lactation for the whole ten months. The second time we breed the cows artificially because they are more mature and can have a bigger calf. We breed with some bulls that have been dead for five years. I keep the sperm frozen here in a liquid nitrogen tank. A man comes every 58 days to fill the tank with liquid nitrogen because it evaporates. When he comes, he leaves me the bulls I want. The better the bull, the higher the cost.

"We try to breed the cows so we can milk them ten months out of the year. They rest for two months getting ready to have a calf. The cows don't nurse their calves; we feed them from a bottle. As soon as the calf is born, we take it off the cow. The calf won't see the cow anymore. We sell the male calves when they are three days old. We don't sell any female calves. We keep them for replacements. We feed them milk for about six weeks, and at about three weeks, we start giving them grain and silage. As soon as they can eat enough to maintain themselves, we cut the milk out. We use milk from our cows which we take from the storage tank. The calves do a whole lot better on this milk, and we don't have to mix it up like we would if we used powdered milk.

In addition to operating the dairy farm, the Piersons farm 1200 acres. Three hundred of these acres produce the barley and corn used to feed the cows.

"We have about 100 calves a year, and it usually is about 50-50, male-female. We have some cows that have all females, but 90% of the time, they will have a male, then a female. A cow will carry a calf 282 days if it's a female and 283 if it's a male. I don't know why but it's like that every time. We had seven sets of twins born last month. We have about 15 sets a year. They don't always look alike. Twins are smaller when they are born. If we have twin females, they will breed. But if the set is one male and one female, for some reason neither one of them will breed. We do 90% of our vet work, and if we call the vet to deliver a calf, he knows it's in trouble. The vet did a caesarean in the lane to the parlor. He cut the cow open, took out the calf, sewed her back up, and the cow went right on in the parlor and was milked. She didn't give much milk but she never did get sick. More calves are born at night than in the daytime. We help deliver half of them.

"The calves stay in the pens about three months. Then we dehorn them, worm them, and vaccinate them. We cut a little notch in their ear when they are vaccinated, and then they can be sold anywhere. If we didn't vaccinate them, they couldn't go out of state. After they get a little bigger, we put them in a lot at the edge of the woods until they are old enough to breed."

Contributors

We express our appreciation to everyone who shared their experiences, stories, and expertise as we interviewed and researched for the fourth volume of **Close Ties**. Without the cooperation of our many contributors, this publication would not be possible.

Martha Blankenship
Russell Bronner
Bernard Davis
Myrtle Davis
Harold and Brenda Delano
Harold Dean Delano
Robert and Martha Delano
Vernon and Virginia Delano
Ben Franklin
Philip Haynie
Joe Hicks
Thomas Huggins
Earl and Charlotte Lewis
Earl Warren Lewis
Johnny Lewis
Kelly Liddington
Margaret Luttrell
Milton Packett
Janice Pierson
Ladell Pierson
Ras Sagaral
Berry Sanders
Richard and Sinka Thomas

The **Close Ties** Staff will focus on baseball in Richmond County for its fifth volume. Please contact Mrs. Martha Fidler, Mrs. Cynthia Bowen Packett, or Mrs. Cynthia Bronner Packett at Richmond County Intermediate School (333-3560) if you have information to share.